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The RING

GENNADY GOLOVKIN

DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

CANELO'S NEXT TARGET

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ROBERTO DURAN'S GREATEST HITS

INOUE, TAYLOR WINS SET UP EXPLOSIVE WBSS FINALS

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Canelo Alvarez can relax a bit after his win over Daniel Jacobs on May 4, but there are plenty of challengers vying for his attention.

Josh Taylor was viewed as the superior boxer going into his World Boxing Super Series semifinal against brute-strong Ivan Baranchyk, but the talented Scotsman proved he could stand and bang with the Russian puncher, dropping his foe twice in Round 6 to clinch a unanimous decision, his first world title and a Ring championship/WBSS finals showdown with Regis Prograis.

PHOTO BY MARK RUNNACLES

CROWNS WITHOUT KINGS

I have been a subscriber of The Ring off and on for about 45 years. The times that I haven't been subscribed are not often. Eleven out of 17 divisions hold a (VACANT) where The Ring Magazine's champion should be? I know that your rating system and champ system are set up trying to be fair. However, I don't think that the number one boxing magazine should be unable to fill almost two-thirds of the champion slots. We the boxing fans certainly can whittle the 17 divisions down to maybe five vacancies at most. Do you plan on changing your long-standing system?

Danny Prestwich
New Windsor, Md.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: In short, no. Or at least not in a fundamental way. Our system operates in conjunction with our rankings whereby vacancies are filled by fights between No. 1 vs. No. 2 and sometimes No. 3. So even if we were to fill vacancies by assigning a belt without a fight, then the only thing that would make sense would be to give it to the fighter currently ranked at No. 1. But even that wouldn't solve the problem that has been truly holding back this process: the best so rarely fighting the best. Because of all the tiresome obstacles in our modern landscape, a fight involving two of the top three fighters is very uncommon. Simply having SOMEbody with a belt around their waist wouldn't change that. At least with the slow approach, they have to earn it with a true test in the ring. On the bright side, the bantamweight championship has now been filled by Naoya Inoue, and the 140-pound WBSS final between Regis Prograis and Josh Taylor will crown a champion in that division. By the time this issue sees print, the inaugural Ring women's lightweight championship will have been earned by the winner of the Katie Taylor-Delfine Persoon title unification bout. So we're making progress. You have to also remember that all of the championships were vacant at the start of the 21st century, and since then some of them have been filled and gone vacant again – either by a fighter leaving the division, retiring or not facing the best challengers.

AS IT SHOULD BE

All was left in the ring by two class acts in the Jarrett Hurd-Julian Williams match (on May 11). From the judges getting it right in an extremely close and competitive fight in Hurd's backyard to the excellent job done by referee Wayne Spinola letting two warriors fight. Boxing is still alive and well. Thank God for Come Out Writing, one of the last print forums for rabid fans such as myself. Just one more way The Ring proves it is the "Bible of Boxing."

Ralph Solomons
Savannah, Ga.

STILL THE PEOPLE'S CHAMP

Props to Manny Pacquiao for taking on an undefeated champion in his prime in Keith Thurman at the age of 40. One of the reasons Manny is so popular is his willingness to take risks. How many greats in their 40s were fighting undefeated champions? Archie Moore? Bernard Hopkins? Very few. After 12 rounds with Mayweather, Pacquiao wants some more; Floyd doesn't. After 42 rounds with Marquez and getting knocked out, Pacquiao wants some more; Marquez doesn't. The whole reason Manny left Top Rank for PBC was because most of the top welterweights were with PBC, especially Floyd. Even if he loses to Thurman, he gets credit for taking the fight at his age. If he wins and fights the winner of Spence-Porter, which is the plan, he'll have another superfight at 41! Win or lose, his legend grows even more, which is why he is loved more than fighters who may be better boxers than him.

Victor Rivero
Pacifica, Calif.

GIVE THEM TIME

I am a longtime boxing fan. I remember watching "Friday Night at the Fights" with my father in the 1950s, sponsored by Gillette when programing was in black and white. Recently I have also become a fan of MMA, especially since more and more fights have gravitated to boxing. I believe both combat sports stand on their own merit. For years, MMA restricted female fighters. But once female fighters were added to the sport, they fought under the same rules as men ... meaning three five-minute rounds or five five-minute rounds for championship fights. I don't understand why boxing limits female bouts to only two-minute rounds rather than the standard three-minute rounds, especially when MMA fighters have much smaller gloves with more punching power than boxing gloves. I am a strong believer that boxing should institute the same three-minute rounds for both male and female fighters, adopting what MMA has done to standardize their sport. I believe this change in the rules would make female boxing matches more enjoyable to watch.

Vincenzo Giacomin
Rolling Meadows, Ill.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Many of the top female fighters agree with you, and it comes from the full gamut of styles. Some of the more technical boxers say that the overall length of a bout is not enough time to implement a strategy based on skills and conditioning, and some punchers say three minutes is not enough wtime to break down and stop an opponent. What you end up with is fewer knockouts and – for lack of a better word – more "flailing" to score points because the fighters are rushed.

TWEET OF THE MONTH

WRITE TO THE RING!
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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

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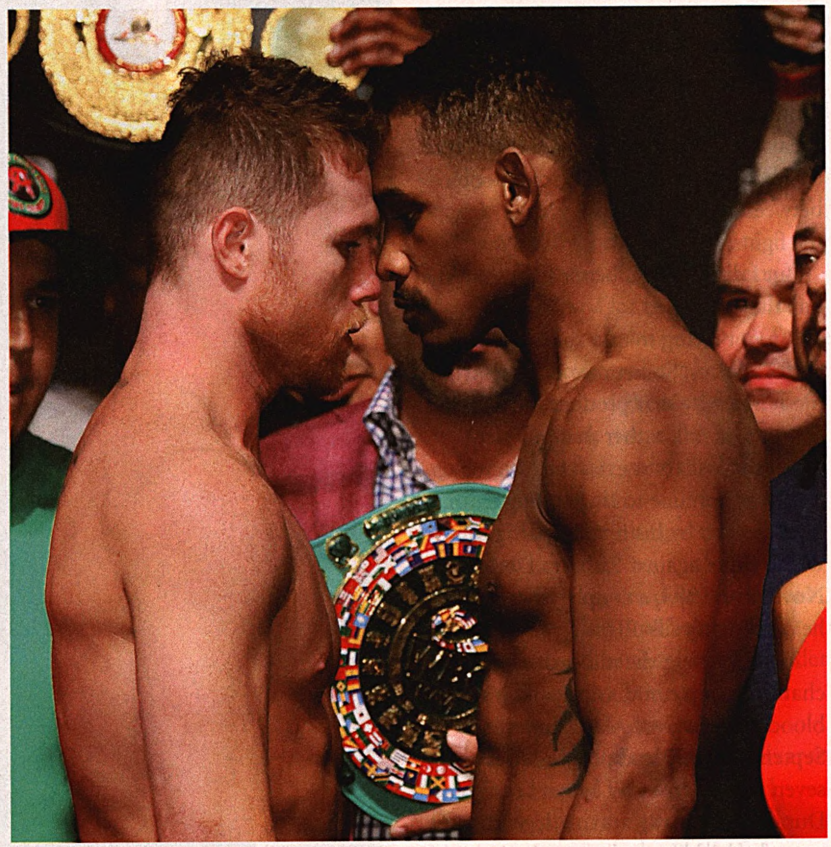
RINGSIDE BY DOUG FISCHER

STYLES MAKE OR BREAK FIGHTS (AND SILK PAJAMAS DON'T HELP)



Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs were all about aggression during their intense weigh-in staredown... During the fight? Not so much.

It was Marvin Hagler who once said, "It's tough to get out of bed to do roadwork at 5 a.m. when you've been sleeping in silk pajamas."

That was the great middleweight champ's way of describing how financial success can detract from a prizefighter's hunger and ferocity in the ring.

I'd never question the dedication and ambition of Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs, given their accomplishments, but the lack of fire during their May 4 middleweight championship makes me wonder if they're sleeping in silk pajamas.

Financially speaking, both middleweights could claim success even before they stepped into the ring at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.

Alvarez, who was taking part in the second bout of his contract with DAZN, was guaranteed $35 million for his defense against Jacobs, who was rumored to have made between $10 million and $15 million. (Forget about his reported purse of $2.5 million. Jacobs made at least enough to be OK with paying close to $1 million in penalty money for weighing 3.6 pounds over the contracted second-day weigh-in limit of 170.)

And, for long stretches during their 12-round chess match, they boxed the way you'd expect millionaires looking forward to their next huge payday to approach a fight, which is to say that neither committed to his offense enough to evoke the faintest memory

of Hagler's epic shootout with Thomas Hearns or his dramatic tangle with Sugar Ray Leonard.

Let me be clear: I didn't expect anything like those legendary middleweight showdowns of the 1980s to play out when Alvarez and Jacobs shared the ring (and I can't stand it when promoters and networks try to compare today's welterweight and middleweight title bouts with the classic round-robin between the Four Kings in order to hype the fights).

But I did expect a better fight than the one they delivered.

I'm not trying to cast shade on their performances. Sometimes boxing styles mesh in a way that produce tactical contests of skill rather than physical clashes of will. Not even the Marvelous One was immune to this boxing truth, as evidenced by his first "superfight," which came against Roberto Duran in November 1983, a couple years before he owned any silk PJs.

Hagler was in the midst of a dominant championship run that began with a bloody stoppage of Alan Minter in September 1980 and progressed with seven title defenses by brutal knockout. Duran was already a living legend, one who had been reborn at junior middleweight with savage back-to-back stoppages of Pipino Cuevas and Davey Moore earlier in '83.

Both fighters were revered for their fearsome, take-no-prisoners ring mentalities, and their Las Vegas clash was expected to be a grueling battle of attrition. And yet, the future Hall of Famers combined to produce 15 rounds of technical boxing, which Hagler won by narrow unanimous decision. It was brilliant stuff in retrospect but a bit of a letdown at the time. Boxing writers claimed Hagler gave the naturally smaller Duran, believed to be well past his prime, too much respect. Some scribes opined that Hagler was overrated.

Marvin Hagler's eight-minute war with Thomas Hearns is a prime example of the right boxing styles (and mentalities) combining to create a breathtaking experience for fans.

I hope I don't sound like that with my criticism of Alvarez-Jacobs. I hold both men in high regard. The purist side of my boxing fandom appreciated the skill, defense and ring generalship they displayed on May 4. However, my inner bloodthirsty ghoul was bored and frustrated.

Again, I expected more, given the magnitude of the fight.

The old show business adage of "Always leave the audience wanting more" was coined for theater, the circus and storytelling, not boxing. Don't let the Twitter nerds misrepresent boxing fans; there are way more ghouls than purists.

But don't think that a ghoul can't appreciate the finer points of boxing.

We love skill and technique, especially when it's backed up by good ol'-fashioned grit.

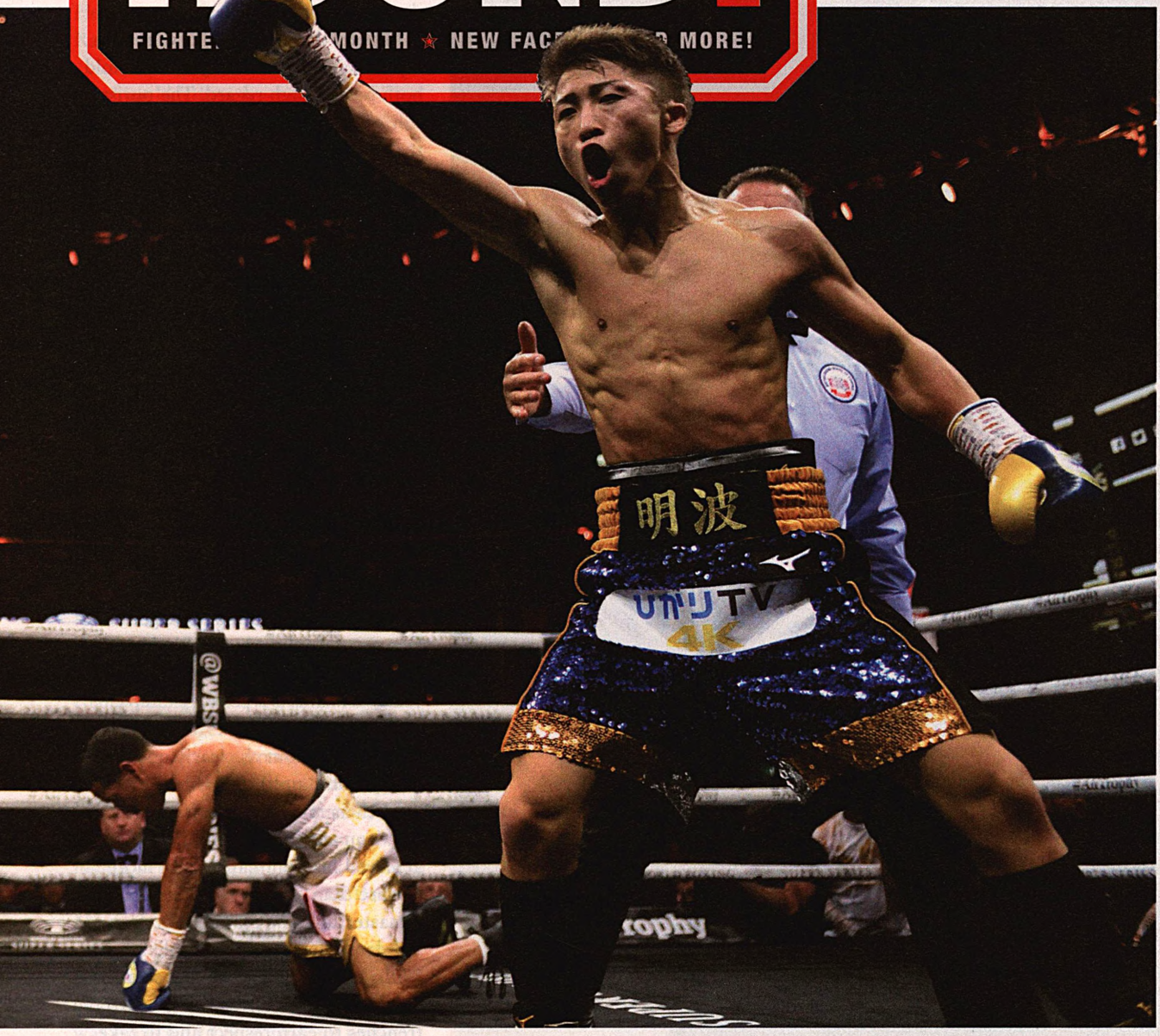
The recent junior middleweight bout between defending dual-beltholder Jarrett Hurd and battle-tested contender Julian Williams is a perfect example.

To my eyes, "J-Rock" won the entertaining bout as clearly as Alvarez beat Jacobs, and I thought he did so with as much ring craft as the Mexican star; only the Philly fighter achieved his dominance with more offense than defense. Williams boxed a masterful game plan, but he also did damage. Again, styles make fights. Williams was facing a brute-strong pressure fighter. He had to get into the trenches to earn respect and to take away Hurd's strengths.

Alvarez would likely fight the same way if he shared the ring with Hurd. His bouts against aggressive fighters such as James Kirkland and Liam Smith were entertaining. His rematch with Gennady Golovkin, which featured elite-level infighting, was The Ring's 2018 Fight of the Year.

Alvarez has many options for his second opponent of 2019 (which the cover story of this issue reviews). His mission for his September ring appearance should be simple: Select an opponent who will rekindle the excitement.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

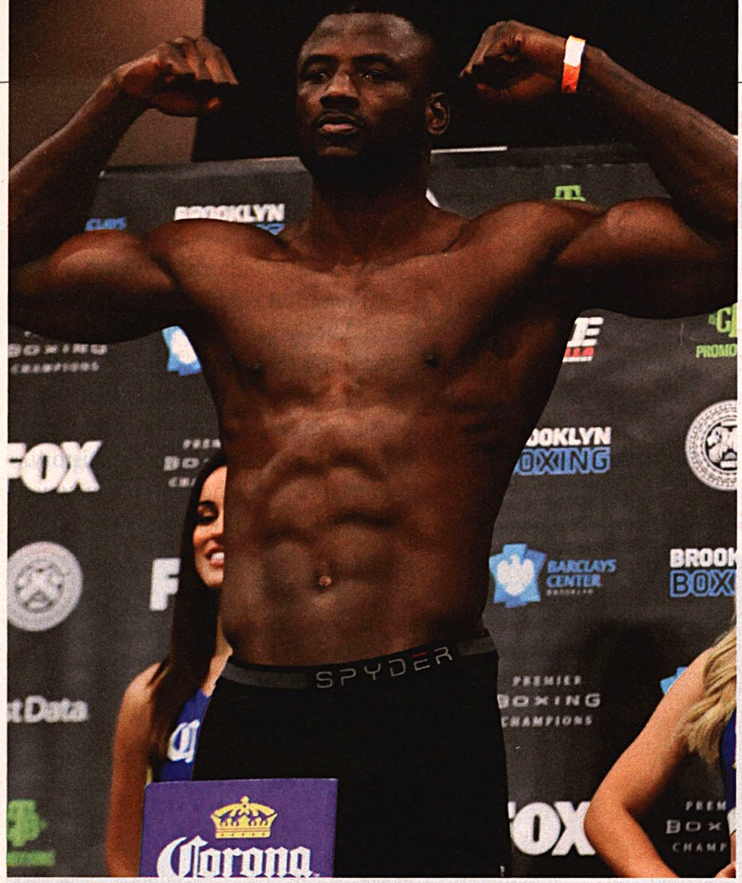


MARK RUNNACLES/GETTY IMAGES

NAOYA INOUE

The opening round of Inoue-Rodriguez was fought on even terms, but the Monster fiercely demonstrated in Round 2 why he's the best finisher in boxing.

There's no trash talking, there's no showmanship, there's no feeling-out time. Naoya Inoue enters the ring with his game face on and looks to render his opponent unconscious as fast as he possibly can. The sum of his parts equal the ideal knockout artist: balance, technique, speed, power and timing. Inoue's devastating second-round stoppage of the previously unbeaten IBF bantamweight titleholder Emmanuel Rodriguez on May 18 in Glasgow, Scotland, sent shockwaves through the sport and left the majority of fight fans asking the same question: Who the hell is gonna stop this guy? In two World Boxing Super Series appearances, against former titleholder Juan Carlos Payano and Rodriguez, Inoue's total ring time is five minutes and 29 seconds. "Monster," his alias, is the operative word, because the man is absolutely terrifying. Now a world titleholder in three weight divisions, Inoue (18-0, 16 knockouts) also picked up the vacant Ring championship at 118 pounds. Next up for the Japanese star is reigning WBA titleholder Nonito Donaire in the tournament final, and "The Filipino Flash" will need the performance of a lifetime to derail the most ruthless finisher in boxing.



JOE SCARNICI/GETTY IMAGES

Respected veteran trainer Ronnie Shields says Ajagba's power is on par with two other heavyweights he has worked with: Mike Tyson and David Tua.

NEW FACES

EFE AJAGBA

By **Anson Wainwright**

Growing up in Ughelli, Nigeria, all Efe Ajagba dreamed of was playing soccer. He played in school, after school, whenever he could. However, life took him in a different direction.

"One day I left my city with two of my friends," Ajagba told The Ring. "A bodybuilder confronted me. They thought I would be scared because he was a bodybuilder. He talked rubbish, and I hit him and he fell on the ground.

"I was so afraid he was dead, because I'd go to jail. People were screaming, thinking he was dead. I tried to pick him up and he opened his eyes, and I left him. He went to hospital because his left eye was bleeding."

Ajagba's friends were amazed at what they had witnessed, and they talked to him about taking up boxing.

"What they saw was like magic," he said, laughing. "The guy was very huge; it was like David and Goliath." An ironic description, given the fighter Ajagba would become.

The 17-year-old found a coach and quickly displayed a natural aptitude for boxing, winning bronze as a super heavyweight at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. He was the All African Games champion the following year and qualified as the Nigerian representative for the 2016 Olympics, where he reached the quarterfinal stage.

Ajagba exited the amateur scene with a record of 43-2 (33 knockouts) and signed with Richard Schaefer's Ringstar Sports, then moved to Houston to train under the experienced eye of Ronnie Shields.

"You don't find a lot of 23-year-olds wanting to leave home and go to another country to hone their craft," said Shields.

Since making the transition, Ajagba has greatly impressed Shields, who knows a thing or two about power-punching heavyweights.

"He's the strongest fighter I've worked with," Shields said without hesitation. "I've worked with David Tua, who was a helluva puncher, but his power is nothing compared to compared to what Efe Ajagba brings to the table.

"(Mike) Tyson was a strong fighter, too. Tyson was fast with power. Efe's not as fast as Mike Tyson, but he's stronger than Mike Tyson."

Inside the ring, "The One and Only" has won his 10 pro bouts with minimal fuss. Last August, he gained notoriety when his opponent, Curtis Harper, saw the Goliath in front of him and exited the ring as soon as the opening bell rang. The resulting disqualification is Ajagba's only win not by knockout.

"That fight makes me popular. It made everybody think, 'Who is this guy?'" said Ajagba, laughing.

Shields understands where the awe comes from when people see Ajagba, who is 6-foot-5 and a muscular 240 pounds.

"He made a statement," said Shields. "To let everybody know this kid is for real. There's no joke about Efe Ajagba."

In March, Ajagba destroyed the usually durable Amir Mansour in two rounds. The following month, in his Showtime debut, he bludgeoned Michael Wallisch. He is tabbed to appear next on June 29 as part of the Jermall Charlo-Brandon Adams undercard.

"The biggest problem we have is sparring, because nobody can go with him," said Shields. "I had a kid who came to spar with Efe, and he went one round. He wasn't even punching this kid hard. He hit him and separated his jaw, and that's with 18-ounce gloves. He was just throwing a reaction punch and caught the guy and hurt him really bad."

Ajagba's long-term goal is to become heavyweight champion of the world, and his trainer feels it is just a matter of time.

"I think right now he's about a year away," said Shields. "It's becoming a problem getting opponents now; they all want to get overpaid. We're not trying to rush him, but we know the competition has to get better, because nobody wants to fight him.

"There's so many good fighters out there today, and I see a lot of great heavyweights. But if Efe continues to learn and keep his work ethic the way he is right now, there's no way this kid is not going to be heavyweight champion of the world."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

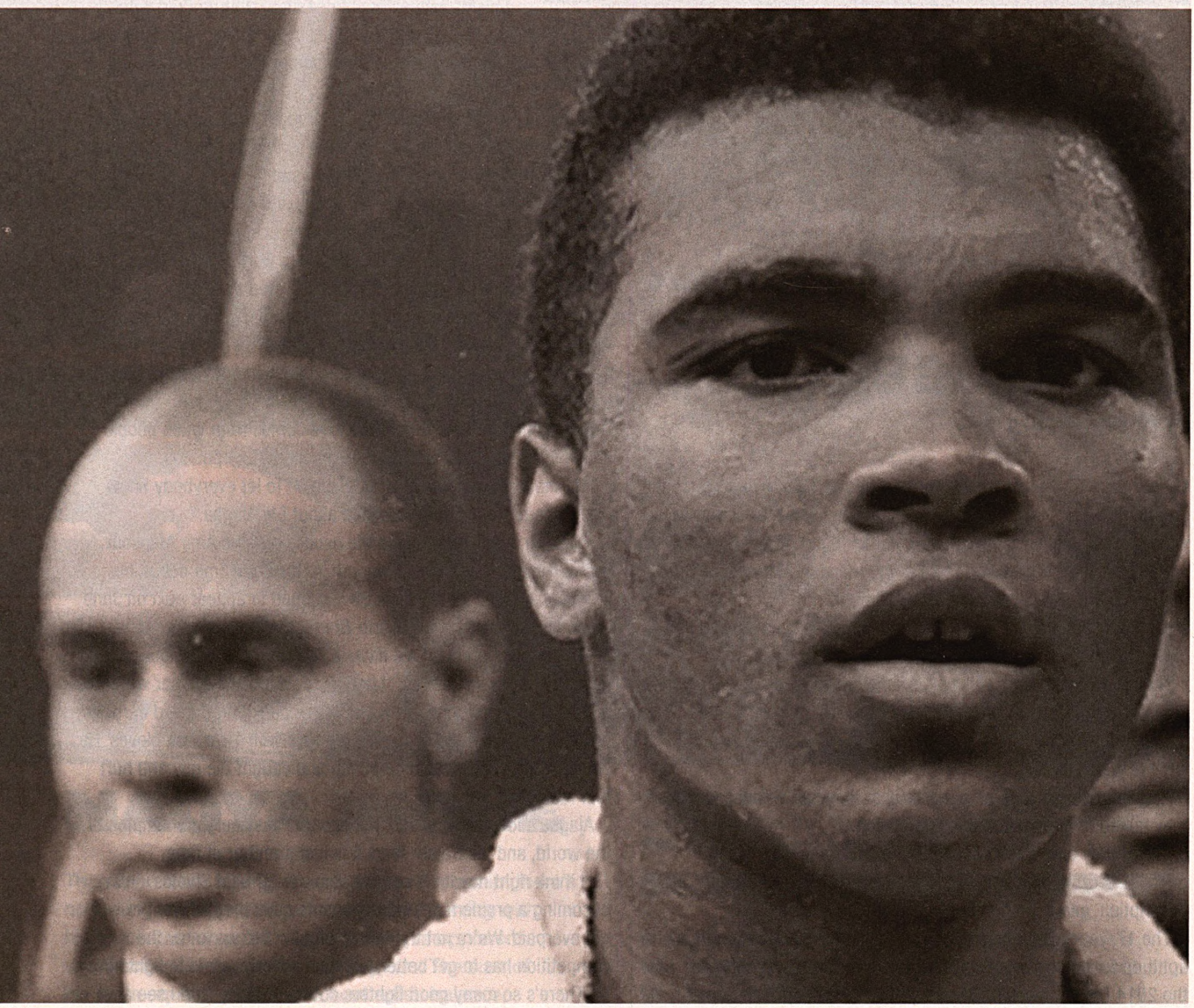
JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

The call came on April 24 from Khalilah Ali, better known to the world as Belinda Ali, Muhammad Ali's second wife.

"Abdul Rahaman just died," Khalilah told me.

Abdul Rahaman, whose birth name was Sam Saxon, was born in Atlanta in 1931 and is a footnote to history. In March 1961, he was selling copies of the Nation of Islam newspaper,



ABDUL RAHAMAN: A REMEMBRANCE 1931-2019

Abdul Rahaman introduced Muhammad Ali (then named Cassius Clay) to the Nation of Islam and Muslim teachings shortly after Ali turned pro.

Muhammad Speaks, on a Miami street when a young man approached and said, "Hello, brother."

They started talking. Rahaman told him, "Hey, you're into the teaching." And the young man responded, "Well, I ain't been in the temple, but I know what you're talking about." Then he introduced himself.

"I'm Cassius Clay. I'm gonna be the next heavyweight champion of the world."

Rahaman was a captain in the Nation of Islam mosque in Miami at the time. He'd first heard the teaching of Elijah Muhammad in 1955. "I was what you'd call a sportsman," he told me in 1989 while I was researching *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*. "A man who shot pool, played poker and attended sporting events. That's the kind of life I was living. A brother named James, who Elijah Muhammad sent to Atlanta, taught me. The first time I heard the word of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I knew it was the truth. I was convinced God had sent us a Messenger."

At Elijah Muhammad's urging, Rahaman moved from Atlanta to Los Angeles and then Chicago. He and his wife lived in the Windy City until 1961 when "the Messenger" sent them to Miami. The minister in charge of the Miami temple was a man named Ishmael Sabakhan. Rahaman became his captain.

"That wasn't like being a military captain," Rahaman explained. "My job was to see that the men in the temple were trained to be good providers for their family, made physically fit and taught how to live right. Once you become a Muslim, you have to study, and I was also in charge of helping everybody in the mosque with that. There weren't many members who attended regularly. Realistically, in Miami, we had about 30. More than that believed, but only about 30 came regularly."

To provide for his family, Rahaman worked at Hialeah Race Track, Gulfstream and Tropical Park. "One track runs at a time in Miami," he recounted. "When the first closes, the next opens up. You know the men's rooms where you see those brothers in there with shaving lotion and Bromo Seltzer and the towels? I had those concessions and the shoeshine stands. There were three brothers working for me, one track after the next."

Rahaman knew who Cassius Clay was. He'd been aware of him since the 1960 Olympics. Clay asked Rahaman if he'd like to come to his hotel room and look at his scrapbook. Rahaman said yes. Things flowed from there.

"I went to his room," Rahaman told me. "He was sharing it with another fighter. The scrapbook was full of articles about himself, and I looked at it real good. He was interested in himself and he was interested in Islam, and we talked about both at the same time. He was familiar in passing with some of our teachings, although he'd never studied or been taught. And I saw the cockiness in him. I knew if I could put the truth to him, he'd be great. So I invited him to our next meeting at the mosque."

Eventually, Jeremiah Shabazz would move to Miami to oversee Clay's teaching. And Malcolm X had a crucial role in the process. But Rahaman remained involved.

"I taught him straight, like it really was," Rahaman reminisced. "The same way I'd teach anybody else. The only difference between him and the other brothers was, because of his profession, he didn't have the same duties in the temple. We used to eat together at the Famous Chef Café. When I first sat down with Cassius, no one had taught him about not eating pork. But it wasn't hard to get him to change. He didn't drink or smoke or do drugs, and he didn't mind changing what he ate at all. At the meetings, he never talked much. He just sat there, listening, wanting to learn. He was a beautiful young man. All he wanted was what was right for our people. The Messenger taught – and it's definitely true – that we're no greater than the least one of us. If we don't pull the little man that society rejects up out of the mud, then we as a people are nothing. And Cassius understood that."

Rahaman was in the corner for several of Ali's fights prior to Muhammad's 1967 exile from boxing. One of those fights was the infamous "what's my name" beating of Ernie Terrell.

"There was me and Angelo and I don't remember who else," Rahaman recounted. "And I don't regret what Ali did to Terrell. Ernie knew us because I had tried to convert him in Miami when he and Ali sparred together. He knew what we stood for, and still he gave comfort to our enemies by calling Ali 'Clay.' Before the fight, I had it in my mind that we were going to make him call Ali by his proper name. I told Ali that. Then, during the fight, I reminded him, 'Make him call your name.' You know the beating Terrell took for not answering, but I don't see no need for an apology. The referee had authority to stop the fight. The doctor had authority to stop the fight. Terrell's corner could have stopped it if it was so cruel." RING

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – Protect Yourself at All Times – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

THE TRAGEDY OF MAGOMED ABDUSALAMOV

THE FACE OF BOXING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WOJTEK URBANEK

TEXT BY THOMAS HAUSER

On November 2, 2013, Russian heavyweight Magomed Abdusalamov suffered life-altering brain damage in a fight against Mike Perez at Madison Square Garden.

Abdusalamov and his wife now live in Connecticut with their three daughters. The right side of his body is fully paralyzed. There's a scar the shape and size of a horseshoe on the right side of his head. He can control his left hand to a degree and part of his left arm. He tires easily and suffers from seizures. He cannot walk or control his bodily functions.

Magomed tries to speak, sometimes in English and sometimes in Russian. Often what he says is unintelligible. At best, only a few words come out at a time. Sometimes they're appropriate to the situation. Other times, they're not. He knows he's injured. The extent to which he understands his condition is uncertain. Almost always, there's a vacant look in his eyes. He will never be independent or self-reliant again.

Wojtek Urbanek journeyed to Magomed's home to photograph him.

"I saw him the moment I walked in the door," Urbanek remembers. "It was like crossing from the normal to a different kind of world. Mago was surrounded by women of all ages who love him. I felt enormous pain, enormous tragedy, but also enormous love.

"I had heard about the fight. But the first time I watched it was just before I went to his home. During the photo shoot, I told myself to control my emotions and focus on the job. As a photographer, I look for more than the outside of a person. I try to find the person inside. In a way, the experience felt spiritual, a little like going to church. And it was a reminder of how fragile our lives are. Mago went into the ring a strong man, a husband, a father. Then this happened. He sacrificed his life for his family to have a better life. But no one wanted this kind of sacrifice.

"I watched the fight again after the photo shoot. That was enormously painful. I've always liked boxing. But it's more difficult for me to watch fights now than it was before." RING

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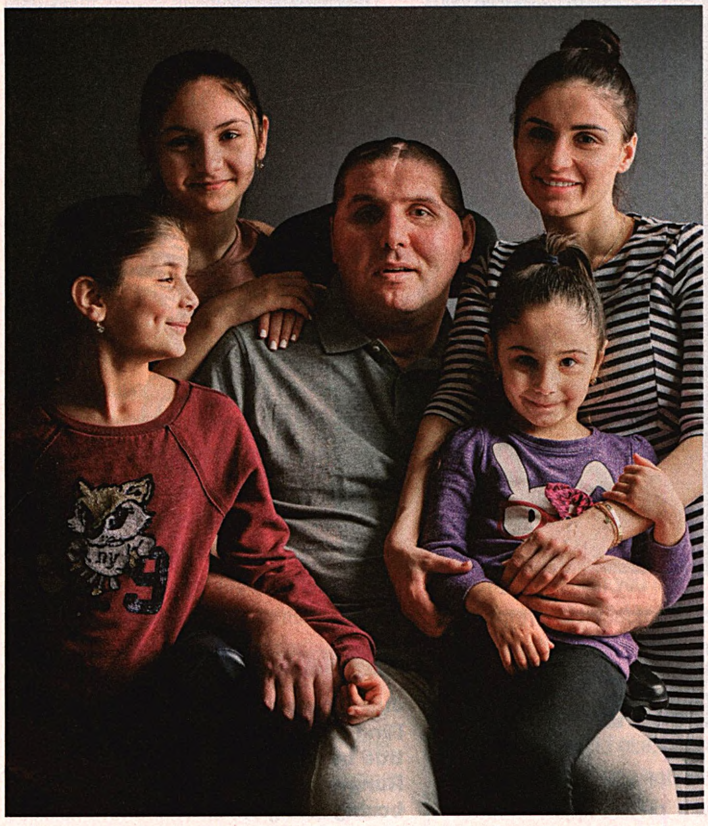

RATINGS SUMMARY

THE RING RATINGS THROUGH FIGHTS OF MAY 18, 2019

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

Juan Francisco Estrada won the Ring Magazine junior bantamweight title by outpointing Srisaket Sor Rungvisai with a brilliant display of boxing and grit.

POUND FOR POUND

The mythical division provided some factual entertainment as Top 10ers were involved in three separate fights, though only two of those resulted in a new order.

First up was a rematch guaranteed to melt every CompuBox button in sight: junior bantamweight champion Srisaket Sor Rungvisai, who got onto the list by virtue of twin victories over Roman Gonzalez in 2017 and came into the fight at No. 8, vs. Juan Francisco Estrada, whose mailing address has been No. 11 P4P for years. Their first meeting, in February 2018, went the champ's way by majority decision thanks to a strong start, but Estrada was coming on hard in the second half – it was one of those "if they still fought 15 rounds ..." kind of fights. For the sequel, the Mexican apparently felt there was no side of the Thai fighter he hadn't already seen, and what he had seen was no threat – which is crazy considering the aura of danger around Sor Rungvisai's power. But Estrada fought with complete confidence in his abilities, not only to keep himself out of harm's way but also to outpunch two of the pound-for-pound heaviest hands in the sport. He got into a flow immediately, jabbing from high orbit, stabbing under the elbows with surgical hooks, bobbling his opponent's head with combos and slipping or spinning away before he could be trapped, always one step ahead. It would be wrong to say he made Sor Rungvisai look like an amateur, but equally wrong to say they looked like fighters of the same class; the champion looked slow, nearsighted and uncreative by comparison. Still, Sor Rungvisai had a late-rounds surge that was helped by Estrada's willingness to stand toe-to-toe – something he didn't need to do with the lead he'd built on the scorecards, which still went 115-113 (twice) and 116-112 in his favor. There was no debate inside the Ring ratings panel about whether Estrada deserved a spot in the Top 10 after such a complete performance (he came in at No. 8), but there were reluctant goodbyes as the inspirational Sor Rungvisai exited.

Also not creating any post-fight debate was Canelo Alvarez (No. 3); who everyone agreed should stay put after his unanimous decision over Daniel Jacobs (unrated) in Las Vegas. Canelo looked good (the video of him slipping 10 consecutive punches is a new YouTube favorite) and there was acknowledgement on the panel that his resume is perhaps the strongest on the list, but the fight was a little too businesslike to warrant advancement.

After spending years on the pound-for-pound fringe, Estrada finally got his due with the performance of a lifetime.

And then there was the matter of Naoya Inoue (No. 7 last month) vs. Emmanuel Rodriguez, which you'll find detailed in Tom Gray's story later in this issue. Until then, let this suffice: Holy shit. The two-round evisceration actually led to a lot of discussion – not about whether the "Monster" should rise, but how high. Recommendations went all the way to No. 1, but he stopped at No. 4 when he ran into Canelo's aforementioned resume. There's still a lot of room for Inoue to grow, and something like a victory over Luis Nery, who is on a daunting KO streak of his own, could easily take him higher.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Deontay Wilder again proved that the most interesting part of his fight preparation might be the meetings with his creative team, as this time his walk-in featured gas mask-wearing contortionists and what looked like a post-apocalyptic Burger King costume – overall a little disturbing. But the right cross that liquified Dominic Breazeale's legs in the first round was

After a tense build-up to the fight, Deontay Wilder put his rivalry with Dominic Breazeale to an end with one enormous punch.

simply terrifying – more so because Wilder walked in with his hands down and delivered the punch as if Breazeale himself had ordered it from the menu. A surefire Knockout of the Year contender, but not enough to lift Wilder from his No. 3 ranking to pass either Tyson Fury (2) or Anthony Joshua (1).

CRUISERWEIGHTS

No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Russia's Artur Beterbiev (No. 6 last month) pounded through Radivoje Kalajdzic in five rounds, which called for a bump in the ratings. The sticking point for the panel was Marcus Browne and whether his victory over Badou Jack (rated No. 4) in January was more important than the way he had struggled to beat Kalajdzic in 2016 – or whether knocking out the rugged Kalajdzic was impressive enough in its own right. Ultimately that's what drove a promotion to No. 4.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Billy Joe Saunders made his debut at 168 and picked up the vacant WBO belt with a very wide decision over Shefat Isufi, whose path to contendership is difficult to trace. Everyone agreed that Saunders looked like his slick, quick, cocky self at the new weight, which bodes well for the fights ahead, but the opponent was met with derision, with one panel member going so far as to say the WBO "should be ashamed" for sanctioning the mismatch. Still, BJ is one of the best in the game and looked more than comfortable, so he came in at No. 10, displacing Juergen "Yes I'm Still Here" Braehmer.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

The fight between division champ Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs (No. 2 last month) wasn't bad, but it was sort of like that safe, efficient speed the car manufacturers tell you to drive for the best gas mileage. Nobody went anywhere in the ratings. … With Saunders (No. 3 last month) moving up to 168, a spot opened up at No. 10. Replacement candidates put forward by the panel included Kamil Szeremeta, Esquiva Falcao and Christian Mbilli, with the nod going to Poland's undefeated but underpowered Szeremeta (19-0, 4 KOs), who currently holds the European title.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jarrett Hurd was rated No. 1 in the division, a unified titleholder and fighting just across the Potomac River from his hometown, but Julian Williams (No. 8 going in) came away with the unanimous decision – 116-112, 115-112 and 115-112 – in a fantastic back-and-forth contest that will surely show up on some Fight of the Year ballots in a few months. Not surprising to anyone familiar with Hurd, Williams' connect percentage was high, with him landing 24 more punches (249) even though he threw 113 fewer of them (687 to Hurd's 800), according to CompuBox. A knockdown in Round 2 helped seal the deal, netting "J-Rock" a pair of belts and the No. 1 spot as a gracious-in-defeat Hurd slipped to No. 2.

WELTERWEIGHTS

Jessie Vargas (No. 9 last month) moved

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

up to 154, so No. 10 was filled by Sergey Lipinets, whose last fight was a 10th-round stoppage of Lamont Peterson in March. Consideration was also given to Alexander Besputin and Vergil Ortiz, both currently 13-0 (all knockouts in the latter's case), though Ortiz only has one fight as a true welterweight on his resume.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Regis Prograis (No. 1 last month) punched his ticket to the World Boxing Super Series final with a sixth-round stoppage of Kiryl Relikh, who went from No. 4 to No. 7 – almost much sooner when the Belarusian was dropped by a body shot in the opening round. Prograis once again showed the mix of power and free-flowing skills that earned him a penthouse in the division despite not having a world title – which now he does, thanks to Relikh's WBA donation. … Viktor Postol (No. 7 last month) took care of Mohamed Mimoune in capable-but-unremarkable fashion and ended up at No. 6 only because of Relikh's drop. … No. 8 had been occupied by Lipinets, whose transplant to welterweight coincided with Yves Ulysse Jr.'s rematch victory over Steve Claggett (unrated), so the Canadian took over the spot. … The other half of the WBSS final was decided by No. 2-rated Josh Taylor's artful undressing of Ivan Baranchyk (No. 6 last month) in front of an ecstatic Glasgow audience (more on that fight later in this issue). Baranchyk didn't suffer from the loss (he actually gained a rank due to other movement) and Taylor remained at No. 2, which means the Muhammad Ali trophy will be accompanied by the now-vacant Ring championship for the winner of the fight against Prograis.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Robert Easter (No. 3 last month) and Rances Barthelemy (unrated) fought to a draw, but the experience of watching the fight was so despised by everyone that Easter actually dropped to No. 5. … Mikey Garcia (No. 1 last month) committed to life above 135, so he was removed, everyone rose and Ryan Garcia came in at No. 10.

Gary Russell Jr.'s fights are like holidays: Everyone looks forward to them, but they only happen once a year.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Joseph Diaz Jr. hammered Freddy Fonseca to a seventh-round stoppage, but Fonseca was what one panelist described as a "not top 40 level" opponent, so Diaz held his place at No. 7. .... Miguel Berchelt (No. 1 last month) pushed his combos and telegraphed his right hand, but it didn't matter at all in his rematch with Francisco Vargas, which the overpowering Berchelt ended five rounds earlier than he did during their first fight in 2017. Vargas' grit and spirit are unassailable but his body is increasingly less so; he dropped from No. 4 to No. 9.

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Scott Quigg (No. 7 last month) was set to be removed anyway for a fight at 130, but his departure was sealed early by an injury. Shakur Stevenson came in at 10. … Gary Russell Jr. gave Deontay Wilder a run for best walk-in of the month, and once he got inside the ring against Kiko Martinez he looked like his super-quick, ultra-compact, barking self (though at one fight per year it's always like seeing him for the first time). Martinez lost by fifth-round TKO when a yawning gash over his eye brought a doctor-recommended stoppage. There was talk of raising Russell

It's hugs for the time being, but Naoya Inoue and Nonito Donaire will be throwing bricks at each other during the WBSS bantamweight final.

from No. 3 to No. 2 above Josh Warrington, but the quality of Warrington's win over Carl Frampton last year (and higher activity level) edged it for the Englishman.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

The most prolonged debate of the month came after No. 4-rated Daniel Roman added TJ Doheny's IBF belt to his collection with a majority decision. Doheny stayed at No. 6 – no argument there – but the conversation kicked off when it was suggested that Roman should only climb only one rank, remaining underneath Rey Vargas (2) and Guillermo Rigondeaux (1), the argument being based on the quality of the top two fighters. The counterargument hinged on resumes, reasoning that Vargas' simply doesn't stack up and Rigondeaux hasn't logged a meaningful win for years. The latter argument won out (especially the second part) and Roman went to No. 1 while Rigondeaux was demoted to No. 3. … Emanuel Navarrete rose from No. 4 to No. 3 after repeating his victory over Isaac Dogboe (who dropped from No. 5 to No. 9), this time by 11th-round stoppage instead of a decision.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

All the action here was thanks to the WBSS. Nonito Donaire secured his place in the final and remained at No. 5 after a sixth-round knockout of Stephon Young, who bravely stepped in for an injured Zolani Tete. … Inoue did his part and became the division champ with his victory over Rodriguez (No. 3 at the time). That same weekend, No. 6-rated Ryan Burnett moved up, so a pair of vacancies opened at Nos. 9 and 10. They were taken by Joshua Greer (9) and Joshua Franco (10). And if – despite all you know about his skills, experience and punching power – you are a little afraid for Donaire going into his fight against the Monster, you are not alone.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

With his win over Sor Rungvisai, Estrada (No. 1 last month) switched places with the champ and took possession of the WBC title as well. … Jerwin Ancajas rose from No. 5 to No. 4, swapping places with Kazuto Ioka, after a seventh-round knockout of unrated Ryuichi Funai, though the move wasn't without pushback from a panel member who pointed out the quality of Ioka's opposition – even in defeat – compared to Funai, a relative journeyman. Working in Ancajas' favor, however, was the volume of success he has had on the road.

FLYWEIGHTS

Moruti Mthalane (No. 2 last month) held on to his IBF belt and both he and Masayuki Kuroda (No. 9 last month) held on to their rankings after the South African won their May 13 fight in Tokyo by unanimous decision.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Rey Loreto (No. 6 last month) was removed for 15 months of inactivity (and of course booked a surprise eight-rounder the following week), so a space opened at No. 10 and was taken by Jonathan Taconing. Felix Alvarado (No. 5 last month) made the first defense of his IBF belt with a unanimous decision over Reisha Konisha (unrated) in Japan and rose to No. 3 as a result.

STRAWWEIGHTS

No changes.

RATINGS

THE RING RATINGS THROUGH FIGHTS OF MAY 18, 2019

As the possibility of a trilogy with Canelo Alvarez loomed, Gennady Golovkin was set to make his DAZN debut against Canadian Steve Rolls on June 8.

AMANDA WESTCOTT

1 VASILIY LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)

2 TERENCE CRAWFORD
U.S. • 35-0-0 (26 KOs)

3 CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 51-1-2 (35 KOs)

4 NAOYA INOUE
Japan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

5 ALEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

6 ERROL SPENCE JR.
U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
Kazakhstan • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)

8 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
Mexico • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)

9 MIKEY GARCIA
U.S. • 39-1-0 (30 KOs)

10 DONNIE NIETES
Philippines • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C (VACANT)

1 ANTHONY JOSHUA
U.K. • 22-0-0 (21 KOs)

2 TYSON FURY
U.K. • 27-0-1 (19 KOs)

3 DEONTAY WILDER
U.S. • 41-0-1 (40 KOs)

4 DILLIAN WHYTE
U.K. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

5 LUIS ORTIZ
Cuba • 31-1-0 (26 KOs)

6 ALEXANDER POVETKIN
Russia • 34-2-0 (24 KOs)

7 JOSEPH PARKER
New Zealand • 25-2-0 (19 KOs)

8 ADAM KOWNACKI
U.S. • 19-0-0 (15 KOs)

9 KUBRAT PULEV
Bulgaria • 27-1-0 (14 KOs)

10 OSCAR RIVAS
Colombia • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C ALEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

1 MAIRIS BRIEDIS
Latvia • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

2 MURAT GASSIEV
Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

3 YUNIER DORTICOS
Cuba • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

4 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
Poland • 31-1-0 (19 KOs)

5 DENIS LEBEDEV
Russia • 32-2-0 (23 KOs)

6 ANDREW TABITI
U.S. • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

7 MAKSIM VLASOV
Russia • 42-3-0 (25 KOs)

8 KEVIN LERENA
S. Africa • 22-1-0 (10 KOs)

9 ILUNGA MAKABU
Congo • 24-2-0 (23 KOs)

10 ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN
France • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

2 SERGEY KOVALEV
Russia • 33-3-1 (28 KOs)

3 DMITRY BIVOL
Russia • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 ARTUR BETERBIEV
Russia • 14-0-0 (14 KOs)

5 MARCUS BROWNE
U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

6 ELEIDER ALVAREZ
Colombia • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

7 BADOU JACK
Sweden • 22-2-3 (13 KOs)

8 SULLIVAN BARRERA
Cuba • 22-2-0 (14 KOs)

9 SVEN FORNLING
Sweden • 15-1-0 (7 KOs)

10 ANTHONY YARDE
U.K. • 18-0-0 (17 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C CALLUM SMITH
U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1 GILBERTO RAMIREZ
Mexico • 40-0-0 (26 KOs)

2 DAVID BENAVIDEZ
U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 CALEB PLANT
U.S. • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)

4 ANTHONY DIRRELL
U.S. • 33-1-1 (24 KOs)

5 CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 52-1-2 (35 KOs)

6 CHRIS EUBANK JR.
U.K. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

7 JOSE UZCATEGUI
Venezuela • 28-3-0 (23 KOs)

8 CALEB TRUAX
U.S. • 30-4-2 (19 KOs)

9 JESSE HART
U.S. • 25-2-0 (21 KOs)

10 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
U.K. • 28-0-0 (13 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of May 18, 2019

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

- **C CANELO ALVAREZ** Mexico • 52-1-2 (35 KOs)
- **1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN** Kaz. • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)
- **2 DANIEL JACOBS** U.S. • 35-3-0 (29 KOs)
- **3 ROB BRANT** U.S. • 25-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **4 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** U.S. • 27-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **5 JERMALL CHARLO** U.S. • 28-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **6 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** Ukraine • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **7 DAVID LEMIEUX** Canada • 40-4-0 (34 KOs)
- **8 MACIEJ SULECKI** Poland • 28-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **9 HASSAN N'DAM** France • 37-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **10 KAMIL SZEREMETA** Poland • 19-0-0 (4 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 JULIAN WILLIAMS** U.S. • 27-1-1 (16 KOs)
- **2 JARRETT HURD** U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **3 ERISLANDY LARA** Cuba • 25-3-3 (14 KOs)
- **4 JAIME MUNGUIA** Mexico • 33-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **5 BRIAN CASTANO** Argentina • 15-0-1 (11 KOs)
- **6 TONY HARRISON** U.S. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7 JERMELL CHARLO** U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **8 MICHEL SORO** France • 33-2-1 (22 KOs)
- **9 KELL BROOK** U.K. • 38-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **10 ERICKSON LUBIN** U.S. • 20-1-0 (15 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ERROL SPENCE JR.** U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2 TERENCE CRAWFORD** U.S. • 35-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **3 KEITH THURMAN** U.S. • 29-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4 SHAWN PORTER** U.S. • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)
- **5 MANNY PACQUIAO** Phil. • 61-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **6 DANNY GARCIA** U.S. • 35-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7 YORDENIS UGAS** Cuba • 23-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **8 JEFF HORN** Australia • 19-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **9 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** Lithuania • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **10 SERGEY LIPINETS** Russia • 15-1-0 (11 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 REGIS PROGRAIS** U.S. • 24-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **2 JOSH TAYLOR** U.K. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3 JOSE RAMIREZ** U.S. • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **4 MAURICE HOOKER** U.S. • 26-0-3 (17 KOs)
- **5 IVAN BARANCHYK** Russia • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6 VIKTOR POSTOL** Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **7 KIRYL RELIKH** Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **8 YVES ULYSSE** Canada • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 EDUARD TROYANOVSKY** Russia • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)
- **10 JOSE ZEPEDA** U.S. • 30-2-0 (25 KOs)

Julian Williams seized the No. 1 spot in the junior middleweight rankings with a thrilling upset decision over Jarrett Hurd (left)...

... but Robert Easter (left) dropped in the lightweight rankings following a dreadful split-draw with unrated Rances Barthelemy.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

- **C VASILIY LOMACHENKO** Ukraine • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1 RICHARD COMMEY** Ghana • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **2 LUKE CAMPBELL** U.K. • 20-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **3 JOSE PEDRAZA** P.R. • 25-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **4 ROBERT EASTER** U.S. • 21-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **5 TEOFIMO LOPEZ** U.S. • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **6 DEVIN HANEY** U.S. • 21-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **7 JAVIER FORTUNA** Dom. Rep. • 34-2-1 (23 KOs)
- **8 EMMANUEL TAGOE** Ghana • 30-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 ANTHONY CROLLA** U.K. • 34-7-3 (13 KOs)
- **10 RYAN GARCIA** U.S. • 18-0-0 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 MIGUEL BERCHELT** Mexico • 36-1-0 (32 KOs)
- **2 GERVONTA DAVIS** U.S. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **3 TEVIN FARMER** U.S. • 29-4-1 (6 KOs)
- **4 MASAYUKI ITO** Japan • 25-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **5 ANDREW CANCIO** U.S. • 20-4-2 (15 KOs)
- **6 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** U.S. • 29-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **7 MIGUEL ROMAN** Mexico • 61-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **8 EDUARDO HERNANDEZ** Mexico • 28-0-0 (25 KOs)
- **9 FRANCISCO VARGAS** Mexico • 25-2-2 (18 KOs)
- **10 ALBERTO MACHADO** P.R. • 21-1-0 (17 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 LEO SANTA CRUZ** U.S. • 36-1-1 (19 KOs)
- **2 JOSH WARRINGTON** U.K. • 28-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3 GARY RUSSELL JR.** U.S. • 30-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **4 OSCAR VALDEZ** Mexico • 25-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **5 CARL FRAMPTON** U.K. • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **6 ABNER MARES** Mexico • 31-3-1 (15 KOs)
- **7 XU CAN** China • 16-2-0 (2 KOs)
- **8 TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** Mongolia • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 KID GALAHAD** U.K. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **10 SHAKUR STEVENSON** U.S. • 11-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 DANIEL ROMAN** U.S. • 27-2-1 (10 KOs)
- **2 REY VARGAS** Mexico • 33-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3 EMANUEL NAVARRETE** Mexico • 27-1-0 (23 KOs)
- **4 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** Cuba • 18-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 TJ DOHENY** Australia • 21-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6 TOMOKI KAMEDA** Japan • 36-2-0 (20 KOs)
- **7 RYOSUKE IWASA** Japan • 26-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **8 BRANDON FIGUEROA** U.S. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 ISAAC DOGBOE** Ghana • 20-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **10 SHINGO WAKE** Japan • 26-5-2 (18 KOs)

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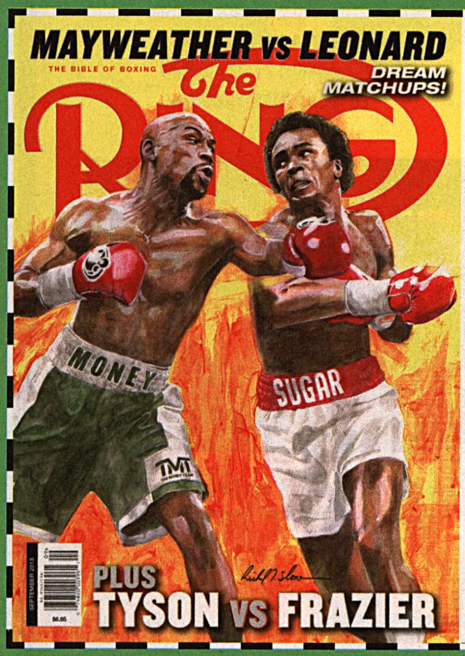

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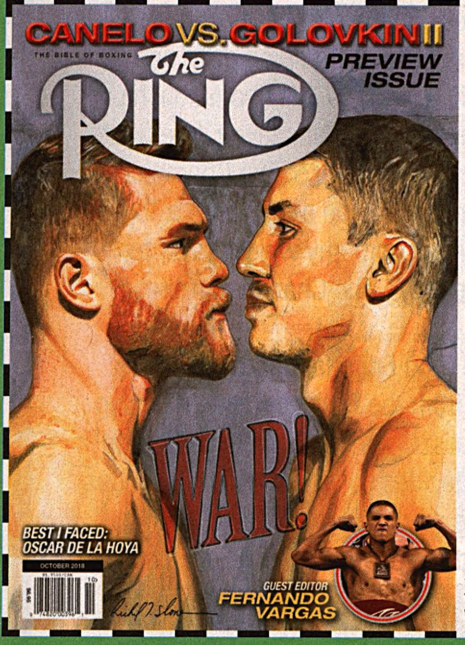

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RATINGS

Through fights of May 18, 2019

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

- **C NAOYA INOUE** Japan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1 ZOLANI TETE** S. Africa • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **2 LUIS NERY** Mexico • 29-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **3 NONITO DONAIRE** Phil. • 40-5-0 (26 KOs)
- **4 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ** P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 NORDINE OUBAALI** France • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **6 JASON MOLONEY** Australia • 18-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **7 TAKUMA INOUE** Japan • 13-0-0 (3 KOs)
- **8 CARLOS CUADRAS** Mexico • 37-3-1 (27 KOs)
- **9 JOSHUA GREER** U.S. • 20-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **10 JOSHUA FRANCO** U.S. • 15-1-1 (7 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

- **C JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** Mexico • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **1 SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI** Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2 DONNIE NIETES** Phil. • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)
- **3 KHALID YAFAI** U.K. • 25-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4 JERWIN ANCAJAS** Phil. • 31-1-2 (21 KOs)
- **5 KAZUTO IOKA** Japan • 23-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6 ROMAN GONZALEZ** Nicaragua • 47-2-0 (39 KOs)
- **7 ANDREW MOLONEY** Australia • 19-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8 ASTON PALICTE** Phil. • 25-2-1 (21 KOs)
- **9 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.** Mexico • 30-4-1 (21 KOs)
- **10 ALEJANDRO BARRIOS** Mexico • 18-2-5 (8 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 KOSEI TANAKA** Japan • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2 MORUTI MTHALANE** S. Africa • 38-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **3 ARTEM DALAKIAN** Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **4 JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** Mexico • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **5 CHARLIE EDWARDS** U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6 SHO KIMURA** Japan • 18-2-2 (11 KOs)
- **7 ANDREW SELBY** U.K. • 11-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **8 CRISTOFER ROSALES** Nicaragua • 28-4-0 (19 KOs)
- **9 MASAYUKI KURODA** Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **10 RYOICHI TAGUCHI** Japan • 27-4-2 (12 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

- **C HIROTO KYOGUCHI** Japan • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1 KEN SHIRO** Japan • 15-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **2 HEKKIE BUDLER** S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3 FELIX ALVARADO** Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **4 CARLOS CANIZALES** Venezuela • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **5 ANGEL ACOSTA** P.R. • 20-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **6 MILAN MELINDO** Phil. • 37-4-0 (13 KOs)
- **7 EDWARD HENO** Phil. • 14-0-5 (5 KOs)
- **8 TETSUYA HISADA** Japan • 34-9-2 (20 KOs)
- **9 REIYA KONISHI** Japan • 17-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **10 JONATHAN TACONING** Phil • 28-3-1 (22 KOs)

Popular prospect Ryan Garcia cracked the lightweight rankings following a second-round stoppage of Jose Lopez...

... while Joseph Diaz Jr. held his No. 7 spot in the junior lightweight rankings with a stoppage of unrated Freddy Fonseca.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** Thailand • 19-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** Thailand • 52-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3 VIC SALUDAR** Phil. • 19-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **4 BYRON ROJAS** Nicaragua • 26-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5 SIMPHIWE KHONCO** S. Africa • 19-5-0 (7 KOs)
- **6 DEEJAY KRIEL** S. Africa • 15-1-1 (7 KOs)
- **7 JOSE ARGUMEDO** Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **8 TATSUYA FUKUHARA** Japan • 21-6-6 (7 KOs)
- **9 CARLOS LICONA** U.S. • 14-1-0 (2 KOs)
- **10 SAMUEL SALVA** Phil. • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)

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RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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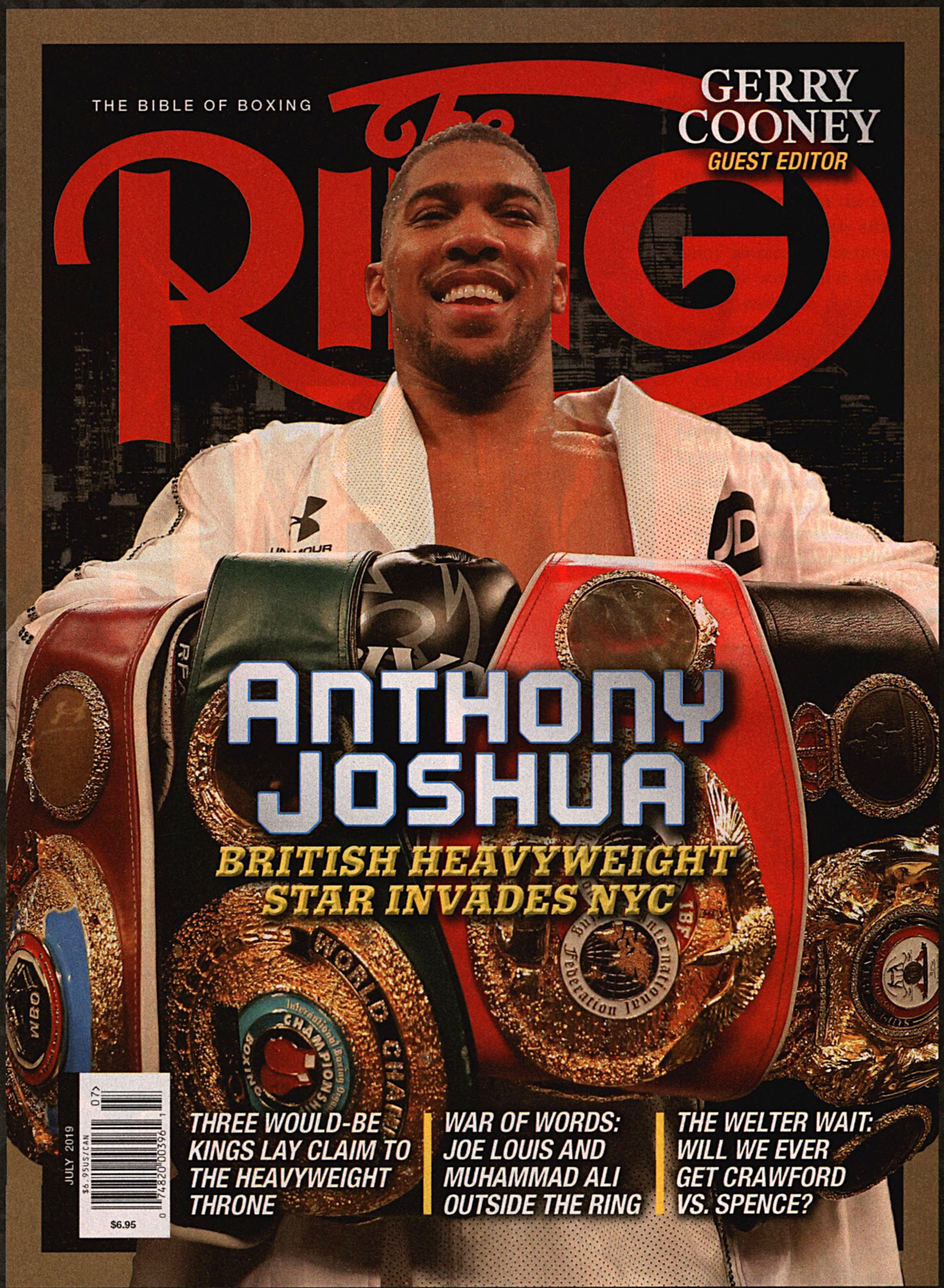

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GENNADY GOLOVKIN, DEMETRIUS ANDRADE, CALLUM SMITH AND **JAIME MUNGUIA** ARE ALL POTENTIAL FOES FOR CANELO ALVAREZ'S SECOND FIGHT OF 2019

By **Doug Fischer**

WHO'S NEXT?

The boxing world is usually abuzz for a few days following a really big fight. Fans consume as much post-event coverage as they can, leave their opinions in comment sections under articles and videos, and on social media to express their excitement, criticism or outrage in regard to what happened in the ring (or what occurred immediately after the bout if funny scorecards are involved). Once satiated with their discourse and replete with the post-fight analysis of a dozen or so pundits, they switch their attention to the future.

On May 4, immediately after Canelo Alvarez outpointed Daniel Jacobs at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, fans were ready to skip that ritual and go directly to the part about what's next.

It's not because the middleweight championship bout sucked. The styles and experience of the elite veterans meshed to make for an interesting 12-round tactical contest that Alvarez (52-1-2, 35 knockouts) won by unanimous decision. However, there wasn't enough drama or sustained action for fans to celebrate, and the official scorecards – 115-113 twice and 116-112 – weren't controversial (thankfully), so there was nothing to bitch about.

Jacobs (35-3, 29 KOs), who entered the DAZN-streamed showdown with the IBF title, did his best but simply couldn't find the mark against the elusive and pinpoint-accurate Ring Magazine champ. Canelo limited the Brooklynite to scoring with only 20 percent of his total punches while outlanding Jacobs in jabs (33.7 percent to 14.5 percent), power shots (45.5 percent to 24.8 percent) and overall (40.3 percent for the Mexican), according to CompuBox statistics.

"It was a little bit of a chess

Canelo Alvarez's potential opponents for his September ring return each bring something unique along with a desire to win.

match," Golden Boy president Eric Gomez told The Ring. "I thought there would be more action, because I thought Jacobs would take more chances than he did. Canelo fought a smart fight. He knew he had to get on the inside, but Jacobs was very good at using his footwork to move around him to avoid the body shots. So Canelo just walked him down and pecked and poked him with jabs and right hands. Canelo outclassed him."

Gomez is a biased observer, but he's telling the truth. No further breakdown of the fight is needed. Thus, our collective attention turns to who might be next for the sport's biggest star.

Before we get to the realistic candidates, it should be noted that Alvarez is a unified champion. He currently holds three major world titles – the WBA, WBC and the recently acquired IBF strap – and each sanctioning organization has its own mandatory challenger. Golden Boy Promotions, which represents Alvarez, was rudely reminded of this fact in mid-May when matchmaker Robert Diaz received an email from the IBF notifying the Los Angeles-based company that Alvarez must defend its belt against the seemingly perennial mandatory challenger Sergiy Derevyanchenko (the guy Jacobs beat for the vacant title that the New Jersey-based organization stripped from Gennady Golovkin last year) on or before August 4.

A spokesperson for the IBF later claimed that they sent the notification too soon, forgetting that Alvarez held other world titles that have mandatory deadlines ahead of their rotation. The WBA strap, which Alvarez collected along with the WBC title with his rematch victory over Golovkin, is next in line. The oldest sanctioning organization has a secondary titleholder – Rob Brant, who faces Ryota Murata in a July 12 rematch – who serves as their mandatory. The WBC has an "interim champ" – Jermall Charlo, who faces Brandon Adams on June 29 – as *their* mandatory.

Derevyanchenko, Brant and Charlo are quality middleweights, ranked by The Ring Magazine. However, Derevyanchenko and the far more marketable Charlo are advised by Al Haymon and are primarily featured on the power broker's Premier Boxing Champions shows, which are exclusively broadcast on the Showtime and Fox networks. Brant and Murata have promotional deals with Top Rank, which is partnered with ESPN. So whether they're worthy or not of challenging Alvarez, those bouts aren't happening anytime soon.

The good news is that Golovkin recently joined his archrival as an exclusive client of DAZN. The former titleholder announced the partnership in March, and by the time this issue sees print he will have made his debut on the streaming sports service against Steve Rolls on June 8.

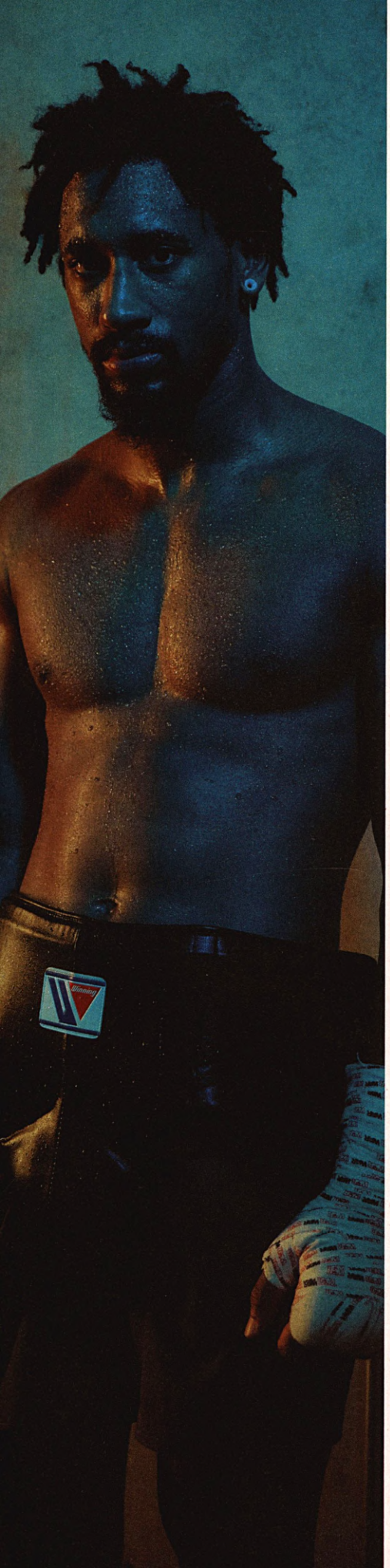
Given the 37-year-old veteran's history with Alvarez – a controversial draw in 2017 and a razor-thin majority decision loss last September – and the monetary success of both bouts, a third showdown is a no-brainer. And the good folks at DAZN have brains. They didn't spend record amounts of money locking down Alvarez and Golovkin to multiple-fight contracts for the two most popular middleweights on the planet NOT to fight.

And Golovkin didn't sign on with DAZN to avoid Alvarez, according to Tom Loeffler of GGG Promotions.

"That was a big factor in Triple-G signing with DAZN," Loeffler told The Ring. "There were big offers from ESPN and from the PBC, but Canelo had signed an exclusive, long-term deal with DAZN, and that's something they pointed out to him. They let him know that joining DAZN would be the clearest path to the third fight with Canelo."

It may come as a surprise to some

Golovkin still has his sights set on Alvarez and joined DAZN to ensure a third showdown.



fans that Golovkin still wants to fight Alvarez, given the controversy of their first bout, the animosity that preceded the rematch and the disappointment of not getting the nod in their close rematch. But while Golovkin says he's no longer chasing world titles after the way the IBF treated him, Loeffler says he hasn't given up pursuing greatness.

"He proved he's the better man in the first two fights, especially the first one; the scores didn't reflect what happened in the ring. So he's confident that he can beat him a third time," said the promoter. "He wants to prove he's still the best middleweight and one of the top fighters, pound for pound, in the sport, and the only way to do that is to beat Canelo, who continues to improve."

And for the hardcore fan who claims to be suffering from Canelo-GGG burnout, Loeffler believes that Golovkin's split with longtime trainer Abel Sanchez and new union with Emanuel Steward-acolyte Johnathon Banks provide fresh storylines and possibilities.

"Banks adds a lot of intrigue to Triple-G's career," he said. "Let's see how different training methods and the eye of the different trainer in the corner impacts Golovkin. If he's just as dominant or even more dominant than before – which is hard to do, because he was the most dominant fighter in boxing with his 23 consecutive knockouts – I think fans will clamor for the Canelo fight."

It's worth mentioning, especially in the wake of the underwhelming result of the Alvarez-Jacobs matchup, that the Golovkin rematch was Ring Magazine's 2018 Fight of the Year.

"We've got to give both guys credit for facing each other not once but twice, and for the ring IQ, which was extremely high, they exhibited in both fights," said Loeffler. "That's what the fans appreciated. Both fights were exciting fights. Third time around it will be even more entertaining."

Andrade is ready for GGG or Canelo but doesn't think the champion's team wants his challenge.

And despite Loeffler's belief that his fighter was the better man in the first two bouts, he's confident that Alvarez is willing to put his quest for more world titles on hold for the third fight.

"It seems that Canelo has a tendency to go for the biggest fight, and there's no bigger fight than a third bout with Triple-G," he said. "Any talk of getting more titles takes a back seat to their rivalry. It's one of the biggest fights in boxing that can actually be made."

Few would disagree with that statement, but that doesn't mean that Canelo-GGG 3 will happen next.

Gomez says there's no pressure from DAZN for Alvarez to immediately resume his rivalry with the Kazakhstan native.

"There's nothing in our agreement with DAZN that says Canelo has to fight Golovkin," Gomez said. "It's up to Canelo who he fights, but he's easily motivated by his fans. So, if they want it, he'll do it.

"And I'm sure the third Golovkin fight will come up in our discussions when we sit down with him and the Reynosos (Eddy and Chepo) in a few weeks. I'm sure he'll entertain the idea. But it's not something we'll pressure him with. It's just another option to consider. Whoever he decides to fight, it will be a challenge."

Apart from Golovkin, the most credible available challenges for Alvarez are Demetrius Andrade and Callum Smith. Both unbeaten fighters are signed with Matchroom Boxing promoter Eddie Hearn (who does business with DAZN), both present historic rewards for Alvarez and both are legitimate threats.

Andrade, a 2008 Olympian, is a tall and rangy southpaw with a style so tricky it makes Jacobs look basic. As the reigning WBO middleweight titleholder, the 31-year-old Rhode Island native holds the only major 160-pound title that Alvarez doesn't own. If Alvarez defeats Andrade, he'll achieve undisputed champion

status and a measure of history, as no boxer from Mexico has ever held all four major world titles. That's one of the ultimate goals, as stated by Team Canelo during the build-up to the Jacobs fight. However, Andrade, who is set to defend his title against Maciej Sulecki on June 29, is skeptical.

"Golden Boy says Canelo wants to be the undisputed champ, but they seldom mention my name," he told The Ring. "I was at the Jacobs fight. If they really want Canelo to tangle with me, they could have called me out and we could have made a deal that night. I wouldn't have taken the Sulecki fight. But maybe they don't really want to unify all the titles. Maybe they just went for the IBF belt because they got Danny at the right time.

"At the end of the day, all I can do is control my career; I can't control his. But I will say this, and this goes for Golovkin, too: I'm not chasing these guys. I'm not going to beg for a fight, because as long as Matchroom and DAZN do their job, I'll stay busy. And as long as I show my talent, I'm doing my job – and that's winning. My job is to fight every other contender in the division until Canelo or Triple-G are ready to face me.

"At some point they're going to have to notice me, because the fans will."

Until then, Andrade (27-0, 17 KOs) will maintain that he's more confident of proving he's the world's best middleweight than Alvarez or Golden Boy Promotions.

"If Canelo really thought he could beat me, he would have fought me already," Andrade said. "If I'm not what I claim to be, then kick my ass and send me on my merry way. But I'm an Olympian. I was a world amateur champ. I've won three world titles in two weight classes. So I know I can beat him.

"Canelo's not that special. If he was special, he would have knocked out Miguel Cotto. A lot of people thought he lost to Erislandy Lara, and Lara ain't got shit on me."

If swagger were a factor in ranking a fighter, Andrade would be No. 1 in The Ring's middleweight ratings instead of the No. 4 spot he currently occupies.

Smith (25-0, 18 KOs) is humble and understated by comparison, but there's no question that he sits atop the 168-pound division. The 29-year-old Liverpool native earned The Ring's super middleweight championship (and the WBA strap) by defeating George Groves in the World Boxing Super Series final last September.

Standing 6-foot-3, the most talented of England's fighting Smith brothers has the frame of a light heavyweight and appears to be coming into his own.

Smith, who will have made the first defense of his Ring championship against Hassan Ndam on June 1 by the time this issue sees print, admits that he was pleasantly surprised to hear his name come up during the Alvarez-Jacobs post-fight press conference.

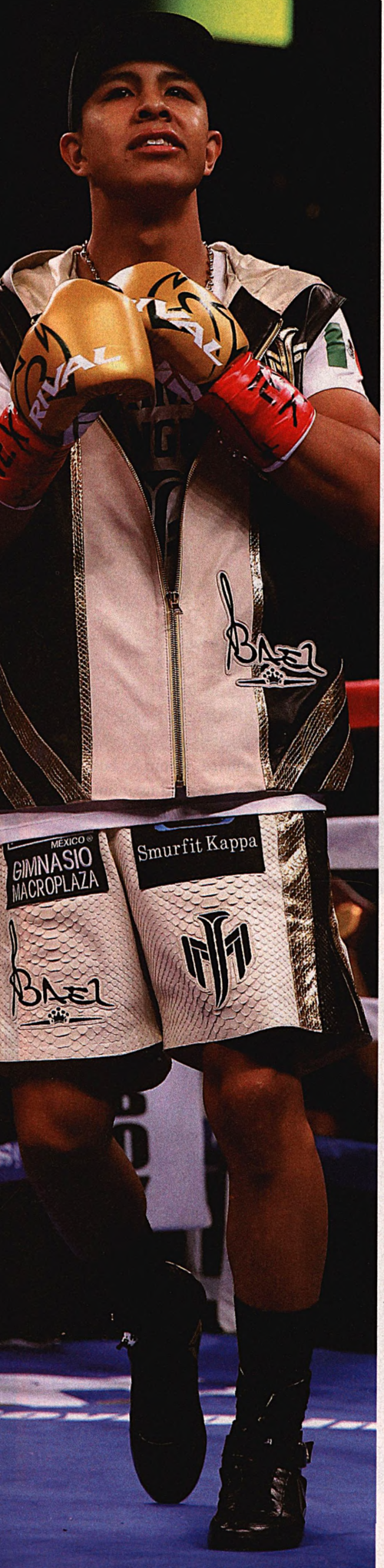
"It's nice that I didn't have to call him out," Smith told The Ring. "It shows that winning the World Boxing Super Series put me at the highest level.

"I achieved my childhood dream of winning a world title, so what motivates me now are the big fights – and it gets no bigger than Canelo.

"It's the only fight that really makes sense if he moves to super middleweight."

Smith represents the most significant opponent that Alvarez, who has twice fought above 160 pounds – a unanimous decision over Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. in 2017 and a three-round annihilation of Rocky Fielding in December – could select from the 168-pound division. If Alvarez beat the Englishman, he would join an elite group of fighters that have won Ring belts in three weight classes, a short and iconic list that includes Henry Armstrong, Sugar Ray Leonard, Manny Pacquiao and

Smith promises to provide the sternest test Canelo has ever had above 160 pounds.



Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Gomez recognizes the history that would be on the line but says that he will caution Alvarez from jumping back up to super middleweight in his next fight if he intends to drop back down to middleweight afterward.

"If he decides he wants to move up in weight, he should have at least one more bout at 160 pounds this year to finish all middleweight business and then make the move to 168 a permanent one.

"You can hurt your body going up and down in weight; Roy Jones Jr. is the prime example of that. You build muscle to get up there and then you deplete yourself to come back down. It's not a good thing. If he plans on moving to 168 and staying there, I'm all for it. Callum Smith is there. That's a guy that keeps popping up as a possibility. He's the top guy, the Ring Magazine champ. Anthony Dirrell (the WBC titleholder) is there, too. Before we did the Jacobs fight, I was having conversations with Al Haymon about Canelo fighting Dirrell."

Should Alvarez decide to remain at middleweight in 2019, one other option could be Jaime Munguia, the unbeaten WBO 154-pound titleholder who seems to have outgrown junior middleweight.

The Ring's 2017 Prospect of the Year signed a co-promotional deal with Golden Boy in December, which has brought the Tijuana native's fights to DAZN. His most recent bout, a majority decision over Denis Hogan in April (which many observers thought he lost), is evidence that despite a glossy 33-0 record, the 22-year-old slugger is a work in progress.

"I know that it's a risk to fight Canelo, because it's still early in my career and I'm still learning, but I would accept the fight if they offered," Munguia told The Ring.

"I'd be better served taking a fight like that next year, but I would take that risk because I'd gain a lot of experience from a fight like that. I'd mainly do it because it would interest the public, especially Mexican fans."

Munguia knows he's not on Alvarez's level yet, but he vows he'd go to war with his countryman.

Being Alvarez's countryman makes Munguia an attractive B-side opponent for Mexican Independence Day weekend. And being a big, strong and aggressive pressure fighter who is defensively raw makes Munguia a perfect foil for Alvarez if the middleweight champ wants to follow up the Jacobs boxing clinic with an entertaining scrap.

"Fighting at 160 pounds means it's easier to make weight and I'll be stronger, so I would look to make a great fight. I think he would too. It would be a great fight."

Alvarez has some interesting choices to make.

He can welcome Golovkin into the ring a third time, making for the biggest event in boxing this year.

He can appease Mexican fans (and the bloodthirsty ghouls) and target Munguia.

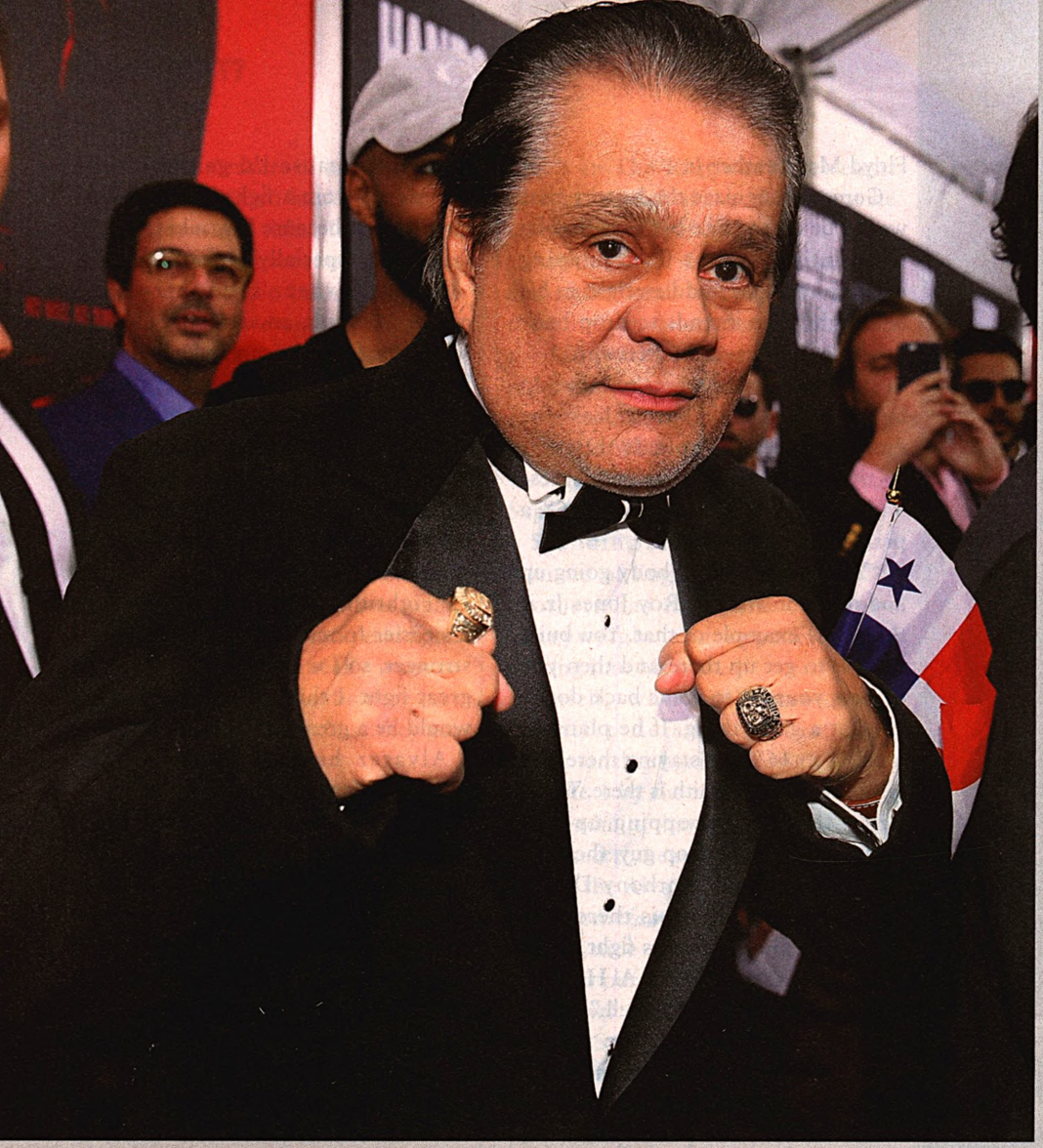
He can go for Andrade and try to achieve undisputed champion status, or go back up in weight and attempt to lift his third Ring Magazine crown from Smith's head.

Gomez says Alvarez is equally motivated by appeasing fans and by making history. Only the fighter knows what his next move will be, but Gomez says Alvarez's selection won't be about money or protecting his record.

"The biggest misconception fans have with him is that he's all about money," he said. "When we singed with DAZN, people thought he was just cashing out, that it was all about the record amount of money the deal brought him, and they said he would never fight another threat. But that's not Canelo.

"All of the fighters in the mix are talented and experienced and have difficult styles, but he's never been one to shy away from those types of challenges, even when we tell him that we should.

"That's just how he is. It's what makes him a great fighter."



Duran has matured into an affable elder statesman, but his ring exploits of the '70s and '80s are still celebrated.

ROBERTO DURAN: GREATEST HITS

THE FOUR-DIVISION CHAMP REVISITS SOME OF THE MANY FIGHTS THAT EARNED HIM A SPOT IN THE PANTHEON OF ALL-TIME GREATS

By **Anson Wainwright**

In his prime, Roberto Duran was a force of nature, as close to a perfect fighting machine as one could hope to see.

He was forged on the tough streets of El Chorrillo, a suburb of Panama City. He turned professional as a 16-year-old at bantamweight in 1968, winning a four-round decision over future world title challenger Carlos Mendoza.

Duran filled out into a lightweight and made his American debut in September 1971 on the undercard of his countryman Ismael Laguna losing the WBA 135-pound strap to Ken Buchanan. The fight put Buchanan and the WBA title in Duran's crosshairs.

Just nine months later, Duran relieved Buchanan of the title and embarked on a legendary run. He's widely regarded as the greatest lightweight in history; his reign of terror consisted of a then-record 12 successful defenses over a seven-year period.

"Hands of Stone" wasn't content with that. He skipped the 140-pound division altogether in favor of chasing one of boxing's biggest stars, Sugar Ray Leonard, whom he beat in a 15-round unanimous decision to claim the WBC welterweight belt.

The iconic figure went on to win junior middleweight and middleweight titles during a career that spanned five decades. Panama's finest finally retired in 2002 after a car accident, doing so with a record of 103 victories (70 by knockout) and 16 losses. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2006.

Duran, now 67, lives in Panama. He is the subject of the biopic film Hands of Stone and a new documentary called I am Duran.

Duran looked back on six career-defining victories for readers of The Ring. »

Irichelle Duran helped coordinate and translate this feature. The Ring appreciates her assistance.

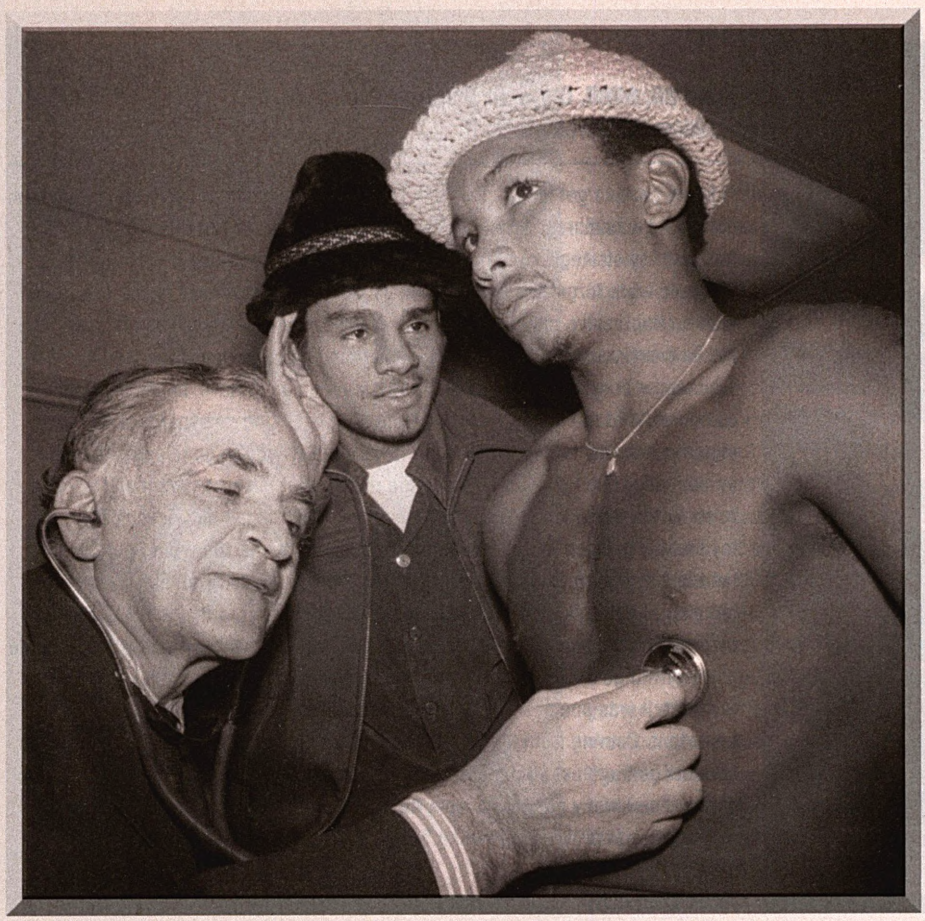
Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter@AnsonWainwright.

KEN BUCHANAN

June 26, 1972, Madison Square Garden, New York • Titles: WBA lightweight

"I know that I was extremely happy that I became champion of the world, and I had the opportunity to fight in New York. That was a dream for me. The low blow was just an excuse for him (Editor's note: Buchanan complained of debilitating pain from being hit low after the conclusion of Round 13 and declined to continue). That's what Buchanan said for them not to take his title away. He knew he was losing the fight, that I had the control from the first round. I had put pressure on him in every round."

RESULT: DURAN TKO 13

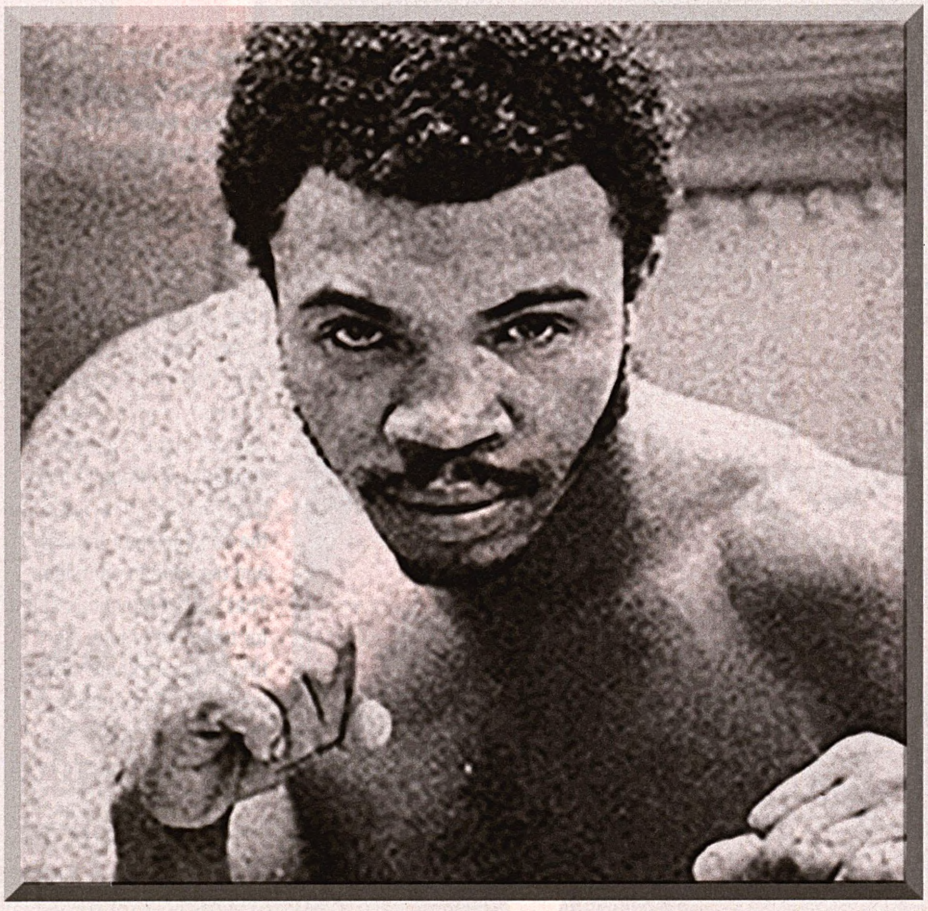


ESTEBAN DE JESUS II

March 16, 1974, Gimnasio Nuevo Panama, Panama City, Panama • Titles: WBA lightweight

"I was thinking walking into the ring that this time it was going to be different, because in my mind, I felt that even though he knocked me down, I won the first fight (Duran lost a unanimous decision to De Jesus in a 1972 non-title bout). So this time my mind was set to knock him out and to take him out of the ring, if necessary. When he dropped me (in the first round), I looked to my corner, to my trainer Ernesto 'Plomo' Quinonez and shook my head to tell him 'don't worry, I'm fine, nothing happened, I'm not dizzy.' After that knockdown, I became angry and stronger, and all I wanted was to defeat him. I wasn't going to leave anything in the hands of the judges."

RESULT: DURAN KO 11

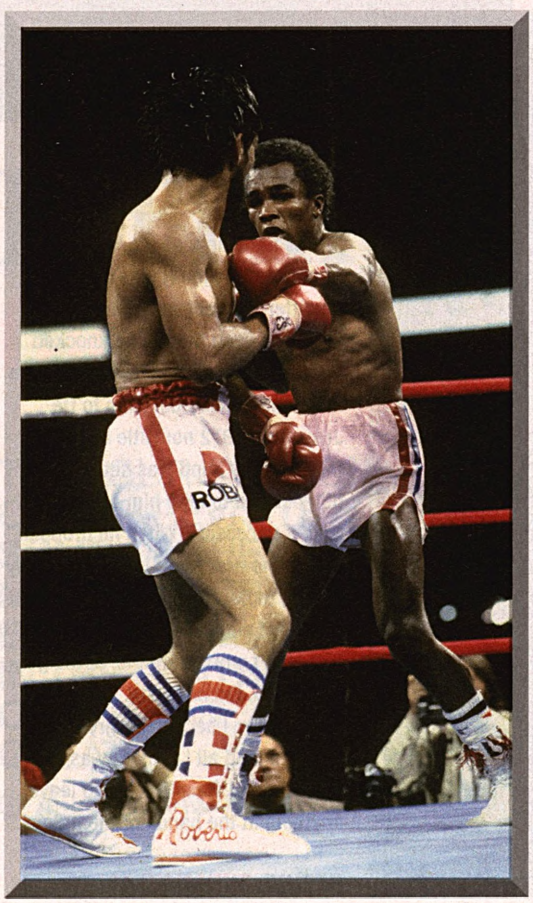


RAY LAMPKIN

March 2, 1975, Gimnasio Nuevo Panama, Panama City, Panama
• **Titles:** WBA lightweight

"I felt proud of being a Panamanian and loved by my countrymen. I was always grateful to be able to fight in my country and give them joy through my fights. It has been my greatest honor to represent Panama. I said next time I will send (Lampkin) to the morgue, because I had to lose a lot of weight and I felt very weak. Remember, back in that time the weigh-in was the same day as the fight. So I wasn't feeling as powerful. I could have ended the fight earlier, but I was not in my best shape. Still, it was a great fight, great KO, and Lampkin was a great rival. I just want to clarify that it was a figure of speech – not that I actually wanted to kill him." (laughs)

RESULT: DURAN KO 14

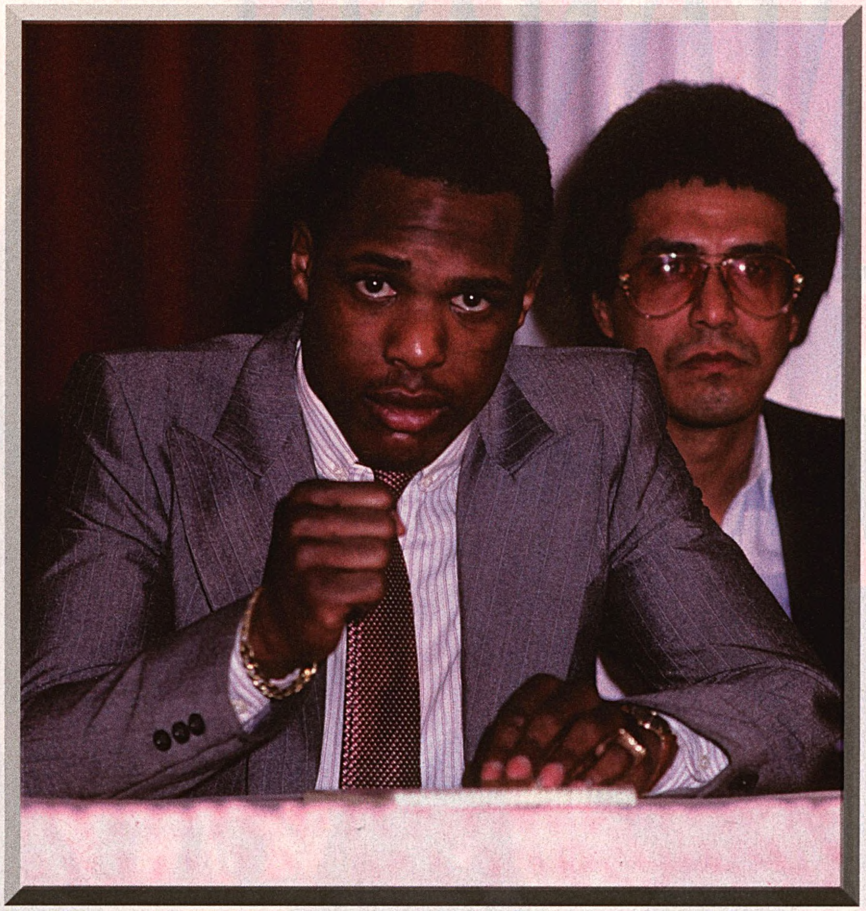


SUGAR RAY LEONARD

June 20, 1980, Olympic Stadium, Montreal
• **Titles:** WBC welterweight

"I knew I had to get inside his head. I used tactics like insulting him, calling him names – I was disrespectful in every sense of the word, but this was a war and this was my strategy. You know, I was just so upset, because it was almost as if people were forgetting my capabilities, forgetting that I was also a champion with an impressive resume, and here comes this pretty boy, golden boy, and the media went crazy for him. He was indeed the media golden child: well spoken, educated – something that I never had the privilege to have, because I was so poor that at the age of 5 I was on the streets selling newspapers, cleaning shoes to help my family, and I didn't have the privilege to go to school and get an education. So I guess this made me mad, and it became personal. I needed to show the world who 'Hands of Stone' was, so I trained like never before in my life. My mission in that moment was to rip from him the welterweight title. I made him fight my fight because he was a boxer. I frustrated him. I confused him completely. Like I said before, my strategy was to get inside his head and take away his concentration, and it paid off. He took it so personally that it made him want to go toe-to-toe with me, and that was his biggest mistake: to fight my fight. It was one of the most important victories of my life, if not the most important. Coming from lightweight to fight a true welterweight champion and take his belt against all odds has been the most gratifying achievement in my career. Even in my country, people thought I couldn't do it, and that gave me more desire to prove them wrong."

RESULT: DURAN UD 15

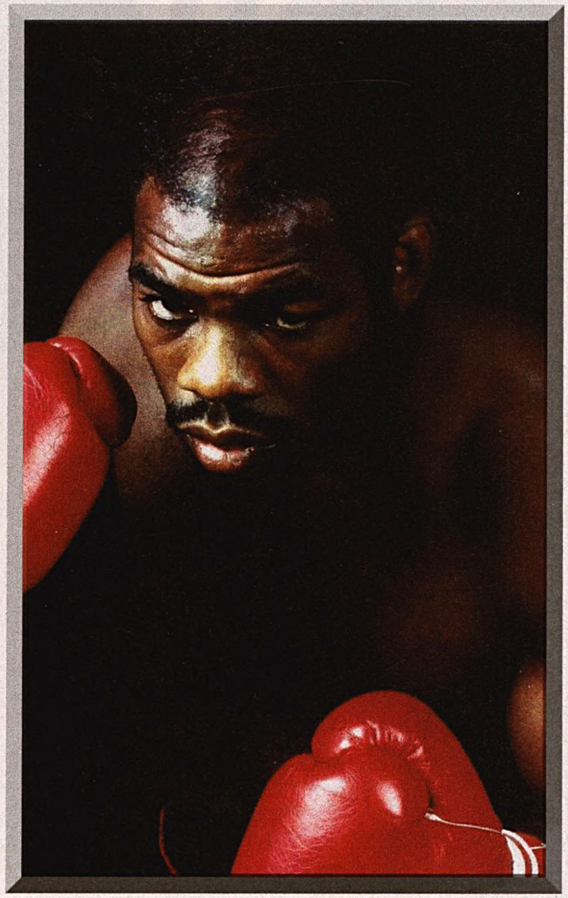


DAVEY MOORE

June 16, 1983, Madison Square Garden, New York • Titles: WBA junior middleweight

"Every since I was a kid, I always dreamed of going to New York. Madison Square Garden will always have a special place in my heart; it's the mecca of boxing. I made great friends there, won championships there; New York belongs to me – a special place in my heart forever. I did surprise the world, didn't I? (laughs) Everyone thought I was an old, washed-out fighter, that Moore for sure would put an end to my career. But I'm like a cat; I have nine lives. When I prepared myself to be my best, nobody could beat me. That night at the Garden, I was inspired and fully motivated. I was thankful to Davey for giving me the opportunity to fight him. I guess beating an old-timer would have been great to have on his resume, but when you are fighting with an old fox, you can't be overconfident."

RESULT: DURAN TKO 8



IRAN BARKLEY

February 24, 1989, Convention Center, Atlantic City • Titles: WBC middleweight

"I asked (late president of the WBC) Mr. Jose Sulaiman, R.I.P., to speak to Barkley to give me the opportunity to fight him, and Mr. Sulaiman said that he would help me with the condition that if I lose the fight, I had to retire from boxing. So Barkley gave me the chance to fight him, because they told him I was already finished and it would be nice to add another legend to his resume. Also because he wanted to avenge Davey Moore's defeat against me. They were close friends, and Barkley hated me for the way I beat Moore, R.I.P. When I saw Barkley, I saw how strong and big he was. I knew it was going to be a great challenge to beat him. But mentally and physically, even at 37, I felt very powerful during my training camp. I knew it was my last chance; I knew that everything was at stake. Mentally, I was so focused. I never saw myself getting defeated; it was never in my mind: What if I lose?' Never! I went to Miami, Florida, to prepare myself in my training camp. I was sparring against 180-pounders. I was running with soldier boots on the beach, in the sand, to get my legs strong. I prepared myself physically so well that going the 12 rounds with Barkley was a piece of cake for me. Don't get me wrong, he was a powerful puncher, strong as hell! But I was able to overcome him because of my experience of many years fighting. It wasn't the first time I was against the ropes; I've been there before, and my mental toughness always came through for me. I had to use every trick in the book that night. It wasn't easy, but at the end it was gratifying."

RESULT: DURAN SD 12

REYNOSO'S RISE

WITH CANELO ALVAREZ'S CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT AND A GROWING STABLE OF PROMISING FIGHTERS, TRAINER **EDDY REYNOSO** IS FINALLY RECEIVING RECOGNITION FROM AMERICAN BOXING MEDIA

By **Diego Morilla**

They met when they were both starting out in their respective fields. Together, they steadily saw their names rise from undercard to main event, from local shows to big-time Vegas blockbusters, and from rent-and-food money to the biggest purses in boxing history.

But somewhere along the way, their paths diverged.

As his young charge Saul "Canelo" Alvarez racked up accolades, world titles and checks with lots of zeroes, his longtime co-trainer and mentor, Eddy Reynoso, was always by his side, steering the young talent into stardom but seldom getting the same acknowledgment from fans and press.

If you hear Eddy speak, you quickly learn that the matter is very much an issue that burns inside his chest. On the personal side, too.

"Honestly, I just do my job. At the end, the result is all that matters. That always speaks for itself. The best you can do is work hard, knowing that the acknowledgement is going to come someday," Reynoso, 42, told The Ring a few days after Canelo's close decision win over Daniel Jacobs, brushing off a subject that has clearly bothered him lately. "We are showing our progress year after year with our fighters and what they are accomplishing in boxing."

The question that generated this response was related to one of the thorniest issues you can discuss with Reynoso: the lack of recognition from the American press and fans for his skills and achievements as a trainer. He has brought it up repeatedly in the Spanish-language media, especially in regard to his failure to even appear as a candidate in the Trainer of the Year category of the annual poll by the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA), an act of neglect that he does not hesitate to call "a total disrespect."

Even so, Reynoso claims that he derives no additional inspiration from this oversight by the BWAA, which has awarded the recognition to three of his fellow Latin Americans: Miguel Diaz, Felix Trinidad Sr. (twice) and none other than archrival Abel Sanchez.

Reynoso claims his motivation lies elsewhere.

"I have walked alongside someone who has dreams and who wants to reach the top," said Reynoso, reminiscing about his beginnings with Canelo. "I was already working with world champions back then, such as (junior featherweight titleholder Oscar) "Chololo" Larios, and Canelo was just an amateur in those days. And we moved along, winning regional and national championships, working hard and moving ahead, fight after fight. Short-term goals have been very important. Little by little, we have been getting

Eddy Reynoso feels disrespected by the Boxing Writers Association of America, which has yet to nominate him for Trainer of the Year, but he's gradually emerging from the shadow of his star fighter, Canelo Alvarez.

closer to where we dreamed to be one day: in the history books of boxing. With what he's done so far, Saul is on the right track, and if we continue working as hard as we've worked so far, he will be in the Hall of Fame after retiring."

One thing about Reynoso's reputation as a trainer is clear, then: It has preceded his relationship with Canelo, and, barring a tragedy, it will also outlast it. And planning ahead for those years without the benefit of having one of the best pound-for-pound fighters to serve as testimony for his talent is a task that is not lost to Reynoso.

"When you devote yourself to this sport, you always dream of making it as far as possible. We always surround ourselves with winners. We always get close to people we can learn from," said Reynoso when asked about his plan to put his name on a short list of all-time great Mexican trainers. "I come from a country that lives and breathes boxing, and more than anything a country accustomed to winning in boxing. And I believe this is a good point of reference for me as Mexican, to follow the steps of those great trainers who opened my path, like Jesus 'Cholaín' Rivero, Lupe Sanchez, Ignacio Beristain and all of them. I don't think they were all born knowing their trade. We are going to work hard, because we're on the right track and we hope we can reach the highest possible level in boxing."

This thirst for glory has indeed taken him on a search for top talents to polish and develop. His obvious advantage in this department is the fact that money is not his most immediate concern, which allows him to pick and choose his fighters depending on their chances of success, among other things.

After developing a top talent like Canelo from scratch, Reynoso knows what those "other things" are.

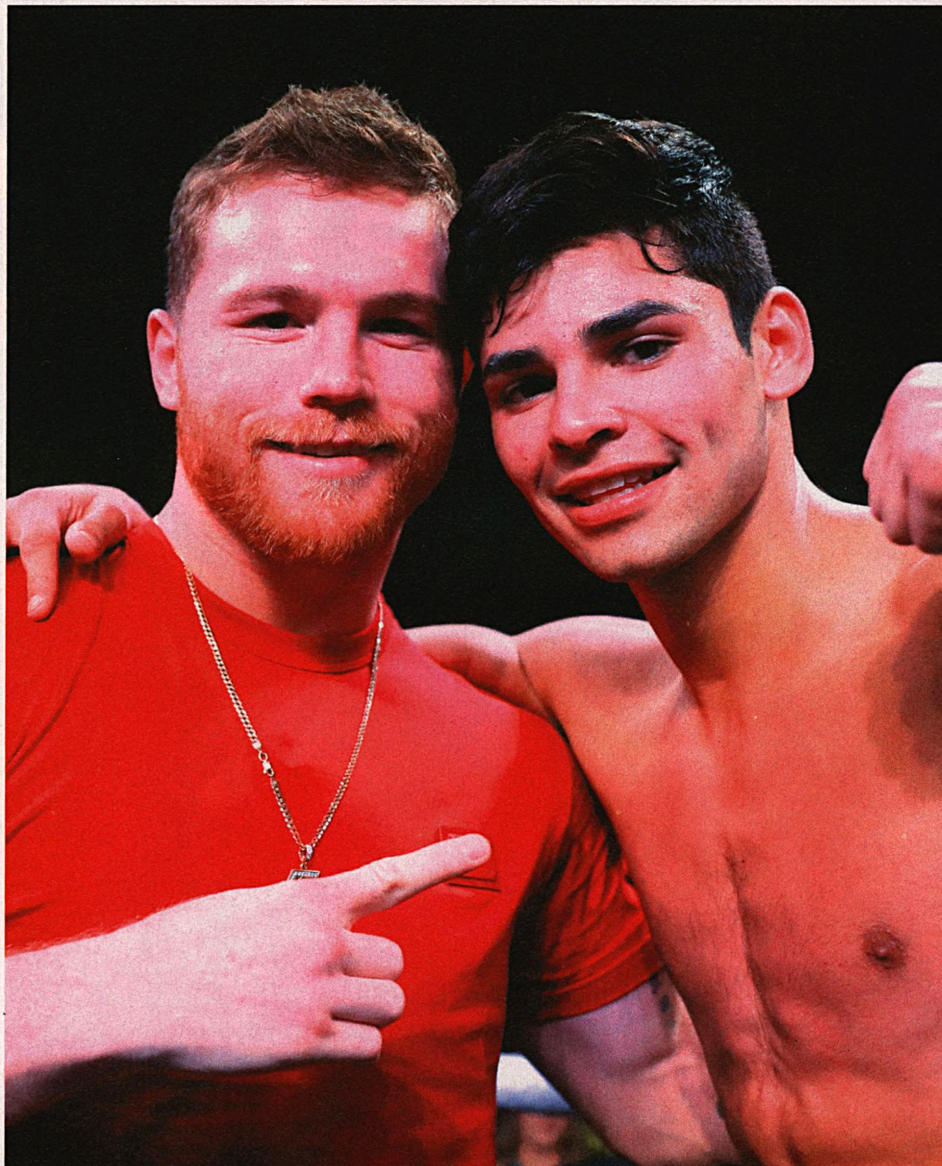
"Perseverance and discipline," said Reynoso, who claims that he built Canelo's career on those two pillars. "I believe that when you persevere and have discipline, things tend to find a balance. And when you have talent, then it's easier to get to the top. The perseverance and tenacity demonstrated (by Canelo) throughout his career are the things that have taken him where he is now."

'I COME FROM A COUNTRY THAT LIVES AND BREATHES BOXING, AND MORE THAN ANYTHING A COUNTRY ACCUSTOMED TO WINNING IN BOXING.'

- EDDY REYNOSO

His two biggest projects are WBO featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez and popular prospect Ryan Garcia, and Reynoso believes he sees in them what he once saw in Canelo.

"I like working with fighters who have discipline. Guys who adjust to my system, who are willing to work on defense, aggression, counterpunching. There are boxers who don't adapt to one's system; they just want to continue with their own. I try to put them in focus, to be useful to them, and this is what I look for before I make the decision to take one of them under my wing."



Featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez and lightweight contender Ryan Garcia (pictured with Alvarez) have joined Reynoso's stable.

HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Reynoso's talent as a strategist is also a testament to his boldness. In a country that prioritizes brawling and mauling over tactical and defensive prowess in the boxing ring, Reynoso was a driving force in slowly evolving Canelo into a defensive wizard, risking his already thin acceptance among a very vocal contingent of boxing fans who clamor for blood, guts and menacing stares as prerequisites to their approval of any Mexican boxer.

Far from seeing this as a departure from the Mexican boxing identity, Reynoso sees his defensive work with Canelo as a deeper connection to the country's best traditions.

"What happens is that the Mexican boxing school has been losing ground for many years, and sometimes people fail to appreciate an effective fighter," he claims. "Most people want to see bloody brawls; they want to see epic fights. But a lot of people like to see a fighter move around, dodging four or five punches at a time."

Reynoso's progress, however, has not been lost on his colleagues.

"It is clear that there has been meaningful progress," said Raul Robles, a respected trainer who worked briefly with Canelo's brother Rigoberto and was tapped to lend a hand in Canelo's camp around the time of his fight with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. (though he ultimately didn't). "I've seen Canelo doing things that only great fighters do. Especially his waist movement, counterpunching, hand speed. I believe I've seen some progress, and this should also translate into progress for (Reynoso's) other boys – Ryan and Oscar as well. His hand is visible in all of this."

So far this year, Reynoso's results could not be more encouraging. Garcia notched a big win back in March and is set to return in late August, and Valdez scored a stoppage in his first fight under Reynoso's wing back in February. And even though Canelo just got past Jacobs in a not-so-stellar performance, Reynoso is still hopeful that 2019 may finally be the year in which the elusive BWAA plaque may end up in his trophy case.

"With Saul, we want to close the year strongly, doing something really important in September," said Reynoso, refusing to name an opponent or even a weight class for his pupil's next bout. "We're going to continue working strongly on the mistakes we may have made during our last fight. Continue pushing with everything that we've done right, and then push some more on aggression and defense. With Oscar Valdez, we're working together nicely. He is adapting to the style we want to teach him. We're on a good path, and this will be seen in the next few fights. Ryan is a very intelligent boxer, a fighter with many physical qualities. He needs to learn and mature in many ways, and we're working on all of them. We hope the company (Golden Boy Promotions) will have good news for him, and we hope to continue working and closing the year with a few more wins."

An explosive year with three of boxing's most exciting Mexican talents in three distinct levels of development would surely bring Reynoso the attention he craves. Still, in his mind, the one thing that drives him, and the one trait that will push him across the finish line, is something else:

"My motivation is boxing, the one thing I feel passionate about," says the creator of the "No Boxing No Life" brand. "I live and breathe this sport; it inspires me to reach the top. It motivates me to continue working with new fighters and to be able to say that when they retire, they will have left their mark in boxing history."

He may not be ready to admit it to the English-speaking press yet (although this interview was conducted in Spanish), but leaving his own mark in boxing history is just as important to him. And if the 2019 he is planning turns out to be what he expects, he will definitely be one step closer to that goal – and to that plaque as well. RING

EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS

WHETHER IT INVOLVES BOXING OR NOT, TALENTED DALLAS NATIVE **VERGIL ORTIZ JR.** ATTACKS EVERYTHING HE DOES WITH THE SAME INTENSITY

By **Michael Montero**

Vergil Ortiz Jr. put junior welterweight and welterweight contenders on notice with a chilling third-round KO of Mauricio Herrera in the co-feature to Alvarez-Jacobs.

INSET | AP/NICK POTTS

When David Lemieux pulled out of his fight with John Ryder due to a hand injury, undefeated junior welterweight prospect Vergil Ortiz Jr. was bumped up the Canelo-Jacobs undercard on May 4. Not only was the Texan facing his most experienced opponent to date in veteran Mauricio Herrera, he was also fighting on the biggest stage of his young professional career. This was Las Vegas, Cinco de Mayo weekend, with 20,203 screaming fans inside the T-Mobile Arena – and it was the lead-in to the main event. Not just any main event, but one featuring the premier Mexican fighter of this generation and the biggest cash cow in all of boxing today. That would be enough to have just about any 21-year-old feeling rattled. But Ortiz is not like most.

"I had some nerves thinking, 'Oh, man, am I going to look good against this guy? He's been in there with the best of the best,'" Vergil told The Ring. "But I didn't really have any nerves about fighting in the co-main in front of so many people. When I'm in the ring, it's just me and my opponent. I forget that there's people in the audience."

Before turning pro, Ortiz compiled an amateur record of 150-20, winning several national tournaments. "This isn't an excuse, but a lot of my losses were because guys in my division didn't want to fight me. I always had to fight bigger opponents," he said.

Ortiz estimates that 75 percent of his fights took place in Texas, but it was a tournament in California where he would first catch the eye of Golden Boy Promotions president Eric Gomez. The Desert Showdown was an annual tournament hosted by the Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio. Ortiz entered the tournament in the summer of 2015, training with his father and Joel Diaz in town to prepare. He spent time sparring with former two-division titleholder Timothy Bradley, who was trained by Diaz for the bulk of his career. The intense preparations paid off.

"I went to the Desert Showdown

on a scouting mission," said Gomez. "First time I saw Vergil, I was impressed. He knocked a kid cold with a left hook, and I hadn't seen that kind raw power in the amateurs since Oscar De La Hoya." Ortiz would go 4-0 in the tournament and win it, stopping most of his opponents in the process. Golden Boy execs were so impressed with his performance that they pursued him for almost a year, ultimately signing him to a promotional contract on March 25, 2016, his 18th birthday.

His pro debut was back at the Fantasy Springs Casino later that summer and didn't last very long. Ortiz dropped his opponent with the first right hand he landed just seconds into the opening round and then finished him with a flurry to the body a minute later. This scenario would continue to play out in subsequent fights, as six of his first eight opponents failed to reach the second round. To date, only one opponent has been able to last more than three rounds with Vergil. At 5 feet 10 inches with a 70-inch reach, Ortiz has good size for the junior welterweight division and punches with authority, but he contends that he is more than simply a knockout artist. "I'm more of a boxer instead of a brawler," he said, "I'm a smart fighter that just so happens to hit hard." With that in mind, Ortiz left Joel Diaz in Indio and began working with Robert Garcia in nearby Riverside last year. He and his father felt that Garcia was a better style match, focusing on a more intellectual approach in the ring rather than banging away.

California has become a home away from home for Ortiz, as he has spent most of his time training and living there since he was 17. The desert climate was an adjustment from the Dallas humidity, and the long training camps away from family and friends were hard at first, but he has found ways to occupy himself. While many young men his age might find unproductive or even harmful ways to spend their downtime, Vergil used it to teach himself the guitar. "I had a music class back in elementary school, and I remember everything," he said. "I remember the notes, the musical scale; I was a good student." Ortiz would find instructional videos from the popular *Guitar Hero* video game online. The videos go over a specific song, showing which notes to play and when. He would slow them down, playing songs over and over in slow motion, then speed them up once he had the music mastered. Today, he can play iconic tunes like "Hotel California," but not only on the guitar. "I feel like I reached my limit with the guitar, so I picked up the piano last year," said Ortiz. "I'm a lot better at the piano than I am with the guitar. The songs I could play on the guitar, I automatically could play them on the piano. I'm really good at it."

Ortiz usually spends a week or two in Texas with his family after fights, but then it's right back to Riverside. He currently rooms with other fighters in Garcia's camp but plans to buy a house in the area soon. It wasn't long ago that he was a high school kid in Grand Prairie, Texas, about 12 miles west of Dallas, dreaming of fighting at the massive AT&T Stadium in nearby Arlington. Only months after earning his diploma, Vergil was fulfilling that dream inside "Jerry's World" on the Canelo-Liam Smith undercard in just his second pro bout. "I've always wanted to fight in that stadium, in my hometown, and definitely on a Canelo undercard," he said. "All of those things happened for me on the same night. Everyone was there supporting me. That's something I'll never forget."

Things have changed very fast for Ortiz, and he seems to be taking it all in stride. He comes across as a natural on camera and handles his post-fight interviews like a seasoned

Ortiz's power terrorized amateur opposition and has resulted in a 100 percent KO ratio as a pro.

veteran, yet he remembers hating public speaking back in school. "I was so bad at talking in front of my class," he laughed. "We had to take a public speaking class to graduate high school. I would get so nervous that I would start laughing uncontrollably. And this was only about 20 people – nothing like what I'm doing now. I've come a long way from that."

Ortiz (13-0, 13 KOs) currently fights in a loaded 140-pound division with killers like Regis Prograis (24-0, 20 KOs), Maurice Hooker (26-0-3, 17 KOs), Josh Taylor (15-0, 12 KOs) and Jose Carlos Ramirez (24-0, 16 KOs). Junior welterweight is one of the divisions featured in season two of the World Boxing Super Series, with Prograis set to face Taylor in the finale later this year. Vergil favors the fellow American to win the tournament. "Taylor is definitely the better technical fighter," he said, "but Prograis is better at just about everything else." Regarding which of the current titleholders he would like to face if given the opportunity, Ortiz makes it very clear: "I would fight Hooker, because we're both from Dallas and both on DAZN. It would be easy to make. I used to watch him in the Dallas Golden Gloves. I think it would bring the whole (Dallas) community together."

Although he has yet to face a top 10-rated fighter as a pro, Vergil says he would gladly welcome an opportunity for a title shot this year. "I know a lot of people would say that maybe I'm moving too fast," he said, "but there were a lot of people who thought that about my last fight (against Herrera). I love proving people wrong."

Ortiz certainly doesn't lack for confidence, and neither does his promotional team. "I'm in constant contact with his father and Robert Garcia, and they're confident that he's ready for top-10 contenders and even titleholders now," said Gomez. "I think he's ready now; the kid is really that good. I've seen a lot of fighters who were special amateurs – guys like Abner Mares, Francisco Bojado and Frankie Gomez – all strong and could punch, but they weren't knocking opponents out like Vergil."

Whether or not a world title fight at 140 happens in 2019, the plan is to move up to welterweight in 2020. "I fought at 141 pounds as an amateur since the end of 2014," said Ortiz. "This year will definitely be my last at junior welterweight. When I fought Herrera (at 147) I really felt like this is the weight I need to be at. I felt really strong."

Eric Gomez agrees: "Vergil feels he can still make 140 pounds, but his dad feels that he's growing and that he should maybe stay at 147. His dad doesn't want him to drain himself."

While a move up in weight would be more comfortable physically, it may prove more difficult politically. Most of the stars at 147 pounds fight under the Premier Boxing Champions banner. Golden Boy doesn't represent any of the current top 10 welterweights ranked by The Ring. They do, however, promote fellow prospects Rashidi Ellis (21-0, 14 KOs) and Alexis Rocha (13-0, 8 KOs). A fight against either of those two young welterweights in the near future could serve as a very intriguing proving ground.

In the meantime, Ortiz keeps honing his craft and transitioning into adult life in California. Although he has grown to love his new home away from home, he insists some things are just better in Texas. "I've had In-N-Out Burger a few times here in California and I just don't like it," he laughed, "(Texas-based) Whataburger is just so much better."

Burgers, guitars and pianos aside, Vergil eats drinks and sleeps boxing. He trains with a vigorous intensity that has caught the eye of several world champions. After stopping Herrera with a hellacious right hand in the third round of their bout in May, Ortiz talked about his training in the post-fight interview. "I spar world champions all the time," he said. "I'm not the one that goes to the world champions and says, 'Hey, can we spar?' They come up to me. And that's the difference between me and the other prospects."

Ortiz has spent time in the ring with former and current titleholders like Mikey Garcia, Francisco Vargas, Jose Carlos Ramirez, Josesito Lopez, Brandon Rios and Lucas Matthysse, among others. "I treat world champions just like any other fighter," he said. "That's why they like sparring with me. I treat them like another sparring partner. I give them tough sparring." Ortiz recalls one specific time when Ramirez, the current WBC junior welterweight titleholder, mentioned his name. "His coach told him, 'You're going to spar this guy,' and he was like, 'Hey, how come I'm not sparring Vergil? I want to spar him, because he pushes me to my limit.' I took that as a big compliment."

Speaking of limits, the sky seems to be Vergil's. The future is bright for the kid from Texas, seen by most insiders as one of the best prospects in all of boxing. The team at Golden Boy is very excited about what lies ahead. "He's a student of the game, and his discipline is incredible," said Gomez. "He went for a long run the day after he KO'd Herrera. He puts in the work. I know he's going quality rounds (in sparring) with Mikey Garcia. He's very mature for his age and very confident." Could Ortiz become the next great Mexican-American star in boxing? It's much too soon to tell. But there is no denying the potential Ortiz packs not only in his fists, but his personality and mentality as well. One thing that does remain uncertain, however, is his alias or nickname; Vergil is one of the few fighters in the game without one. "I've had nicknames in the past that I didn't really like," he laughs. "If a name's going to stick with me, I want to make sure that I like it. If I go my whole career without a nickname, I really don't care."

This writer proposes Vergil "Guitar Hero" Ortiz Jr. but isn't exactly confident that it will catch on.

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly podcast 'The Neutral Corner' can be heard on iTunes, Spotify and elsewhere.

FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH

AS THE FINALS OF THE WORLD BOXING SUPER SERIES APPROACH, FOUR TITLEHOLDERS FROM FOUR DIFFERENT COUNTRIES HAVE AN IDENTICAL MISSION: ULTIMATE SUPREMACY WITHIN THEIR DIVISION

By **Tom Gray**

MARK RUNNACLES/GETTY IMAGES

The finals of the WBSS combine the two most explosive bantamweights and the two best junior welterweights.

Naoya Inoue TKO 2 Emmanuel Rodriguez

"Where the hell do you start with that?" asked a bemused member of the press seconds after Naoya Inoue had demolished the previously unbeaten Emmanuel Rodriguez in less than two rounds of action.

At ringside in Glasgow, Scotland, about to push the button on a deadline report, I honestly didn't have an answer. The assembled media and roughly 6,500 fans had expected to see the "Monster" feast on another victim, this time it was the highly regarded IBF titleholder from Puerto Rico. Outside of his own camp, virtually no one had picked Rodriguez to win, but mouths were still agape on press row. The hitting power, the stunning savagery of Inoue has to be seen to be believed.

"This is the first time I've seen Naoya Inoue, and he's lived up to everything I expected and more," said promoter and Comosa AG representative Nisse Sauerland at the post-fight press conference. "I don't find going to fights particularly exciting anymore, but watching Inoue tonight, I got that excitement back. He's a freak of nature, and I've never seen punches like that; so much power, so much accuracy. It's a real honor to present him in the final of the World Boxing Super Series."

Initially the bout looked like it would be competitive. Rodriguez claimed ring center in Round 1 and matched the Japanese star punch for punch. During fight week, he had told me that he planned on using his natural size advantage to force Inoue back. Rodriguez managed that periodically in the opening three minutes, but his opponent was still to score with a direct hit.

The first Inoue missile found its mark 40 seconds into Round 2 and deposited Rodriguez on the canvas. It was the first time he had ever been down as a professional. The fight was essentially over the moment that left hook connected, but the defending titleholder was floored twice more before his ordeal was over.

"I'm extremely pleased that I was able to knock out Rodriguez in the semifinals and go on with the tournament," a completely unmarked Inoue, who earned the vacant Ring Magazine bantamweight title with his breathtaking performance, said at the press conference.

"He came out strong and had some counterpunches and angles that I wasn't expecting. I guess everybody thinks my fights will be short, but it was a different environment for me in Glasgow, and I needed a round

to make some adjustments. In the second round, I was able to perform better and get the victory. I knew the left hook was there for me in the first round, and when I hit him with it in the second round, I knew he was going down."

Looking on was Inoue's next opponent, Nonito Donaire, a four-weight world titleholder and the reigning WBA bantamweight beltholder. "The Filipino Flash," a legend in the sport, advanced to the WBSS final in April when he spectacularly knocked out Stephon Young, a late replacement for the injured Zolani Tete, in six rounds.

"That was the wrong fight for Emmanuel Rodriguez to fight," Donaire said incredulously when he spoke with The Ring. "I was very surprised that the game plan was to go toe-to-toe with someone named 'Monster.' I know not to do that, and this was also a learning experience for other fighters.

"I thought Inoue was tremendous, very powerful, but you can't take a chance of being nailed by a big punch from him. I'll be dissecting this fight and I'll be dissecting every other fight I can get my hands on. I will be looking to take advantage of Inoue's style. I saw a lot of flaws."

Inoue refused to make a prediction on the WBSS final. The 26-year-old knockout artist wanted to enjoy his moment and was positively beaming as he departed the press conference with his retinue. Now a three-weight titleholder, Inoue had become only the third Japanese national in 90 years to claim the Ring bantamweight championship (Fighting Harada and Shinsuke Yamanaka were the others), and he had taken his already fearsome reputation to even greater heights.

As I watched Inoue leave, I was reminded of trainer Rudy Hernandez's reaction when I asked him who would win the bantamweight tournament following the quarterfinals. "All of them are in trouble," laughed Hernandez. "I rank Inoue as the number one pound-for-pound fighter in the world. Based on his abilities and what he's shown, there's not a bantamweight out there that can beat him."

One man disagrees.

"I want to unify, win the tournament and win the Ring title," stated Donaire with a champion's defiance. "I already have a Ring title (at junior featherweight) and this is a chance to win a second one. This is what I live for, this is what I do, this is my purpose: to seek the best, to conquer the best and to be the best.

"I think this would be the finest victory of my career, because it's so glamorous and everyone is writing me off. This is what I've been working towards in terms of reviving my career. I have faith, I believe in myself, I have confidence in myself. But most of all, I lead a very healthy lifestyle. I'm ready, physically and spiritually. This would be the pinnacle of my career."

Contrary to his affable personality outside of the prize ring, Donaire is a gutsy warrior, and his left hook is still a dynamite punch. To win, "The Filipino Flash" must take the "Monster" out inside the distance, because it's almost impossible to conceive the 36-year-old veteran holding off a dynamo like Inoue for 12 rounds. Can Donaire do it? Other than himself and his team, I've yet to encounter a single person who believes he can.

MIKEY WILLIAMS

Inoue quickly overwhelmed Rodriguez after a competitive opening round.

Josh Taylor UD 12 Ivan Baranchyk

"And sent him homeward, to think again."

Former heavyweight champion Tyson Fury is not the only fighter who can break into song following combat, it seems. After dethroning IBF junior welterweight titleholder Ivan Baranchyk by 12-round unanimous decision, Josh Taylor used his post-fight interview as an opportunity to recite lyrics from his country's unofficial national anthem, "Flower of Scotland." It was done in good fun, but the patriotism was both genuine and visceral.

It was easy to get caught up in the atmosphere.

To the right of press row, a large contingent of Japanese fans, who had traveled almost 6,000 miles to see Inoue in action, were chanting "There's only one Josh Taylor" by the time the championship rounds were underway. It was fabulous. The noise from the home support was also deafening every time Taylor had success – and there was plenty of that, including two punishing knockdowns in Round 6.

"I've not had a chance to watch the fight back, but I've seen the knockdowns on social media," Taylor told The Ring after eating breakfast at a Glasgow hotel the following morning. "I thought it was a good performance and I'm happy with the way it went. I could definitely have made it easier for myself. I could have just boxed and jabbed my way to victory, because he couldn't handle my movement and my angles. It's weird, but I felt bored and I wanted to do a bit more.

"I wouldn't say Baranchyk was a massive puncher, but he was a thudding puncher, and he carried his power through to the final bell. Every time I hit him and went to jump on

him, he would recover and come back throwing shots, so I couldn't get careless. I didn't want to get caught by a big shot and I decided to play it safe at times."

One man who didn't play it safe, at least sartorially, was Taylor's WBSS final opponent, the WBA titleholder, Regis Prograis. At the post-fight press conference, Prograis entered the room wearing a kilt (traditional Scottish garb) and a pair of shiny Versace sneakers. For the uninitiated, those two items do not go together. Team Taylor and the press in attendance loved it, though, and the back and forth exchanges were delivered in good spirits.

"Taylor's long, he's rangy and he definitely has power," said Prograis in an interview with The Ring after his WBSS final opponent was confirmed. "He tries to catch you on the inside when you open yourself up, and Baranchyk did that a lot. But I'm not going to open up for him. Baranchyk comes like this (Prograis mimics throwing a wide punch) and then, boom, he gets caught.

"But Taylor got hit a lot in this fight too. Baranchyk is very good, but I don't think he's on my skill level. With both of us being quick southpaws, me and Taylor might cancel each other out at times, but it depends how it goes. Maybe it's tactical at the beginning, like it was with Baranchyk, then we start fighting. Sometimes Taylor likes to put his hands up and fight, sometimes he likes to keep it long."

With the press conference over, Team Prograis made their way to a nearby casino to watch the WBC heavyweight title fight between Deontay Wilder and Dominic Breazeale. I tagged along and as we walked across the Clyde Arc in Glasgow, Prograis spoke about his future plans: winning the WBSS, becoming undisputed champion at 140 pounds, a move up to welterweight and the dream of one day headlining at the huge Superdome in his home city of New Orleans.

All of that is in the distance, however, because Prograis must first overcome Taylor, and that promises to be an arduous task. One senses that whoever wins this fight will have to open the door to hell and have a long look inside before they reach the finish line. These are two quick and powerful fighters at the peak of their careers, and despite any efforts to play down each other's skills and attributes, the respect between the pair remains obvious.

"I watched a few rounds of the (Kiryl) Relikh fight and Prograis did the job he was supposed to do, so fair play," said Taylor. "He had better head movement and was focusing a bit more on defense. But still, I see a lot of flaws in him. I think he relies on his power a bit too much.

"We'll see how it goes. He is a very good fighter and he's not world champion for nothing. It'll be a difficult fight, a more tactical fight, skillful, because he is very good and he's hard to nail properly. But we'll find each other at some point, and the fight will definitely catch fire."

There's so much at stake here. The winner, with all due respect to WBC titleholder Jose Ramirez and WBO counterpart Maurice Hooker, will cement themselves as the No. 1 junior welterweight on the planet. The Muhammad Ali trophy is up for grabs and, being that Prograis and Taylor are ranked No. 1 and No. 2 respectively, the vacant Ring Magazine 140-pound championship will also be on the line.

"I definitely don't see me losin' this fight," said Prograis with a confident grin. "Do I knock him out? I don't know. But I definitely don't see me losin'. It's a dream come true to fight for the Ring belt. I'm definitely going to celebrate when I win that one. I don't know if I'll cry and all that stuff – I'm not emotional that way, that's just not me. I actually get more emotional when I see other people fight. I was more emotional watching (Taylor-Baranchyk) than when I'm in the ring. For me, it's just business and I do it every single day. I'm always in the gym."

And so is Taylor. Both gym rats, both unbeaten, both world champions, both on the cusp of making history. Despite the state-of-the-art weaponry that they bring to the table, the result of this fight could hinge on who wants it the most. They are so evenly matched that a dominating win by either man seems unlikely.

"I think I've got the beating of him," countered Taylor. "I see nothing but victory for me in this fight. I think I'll outbox him, outmaneuver him and outsmart him. And if it comes to it, you know I can fight. Prograis has got a hard night on his hands, that's for sure.

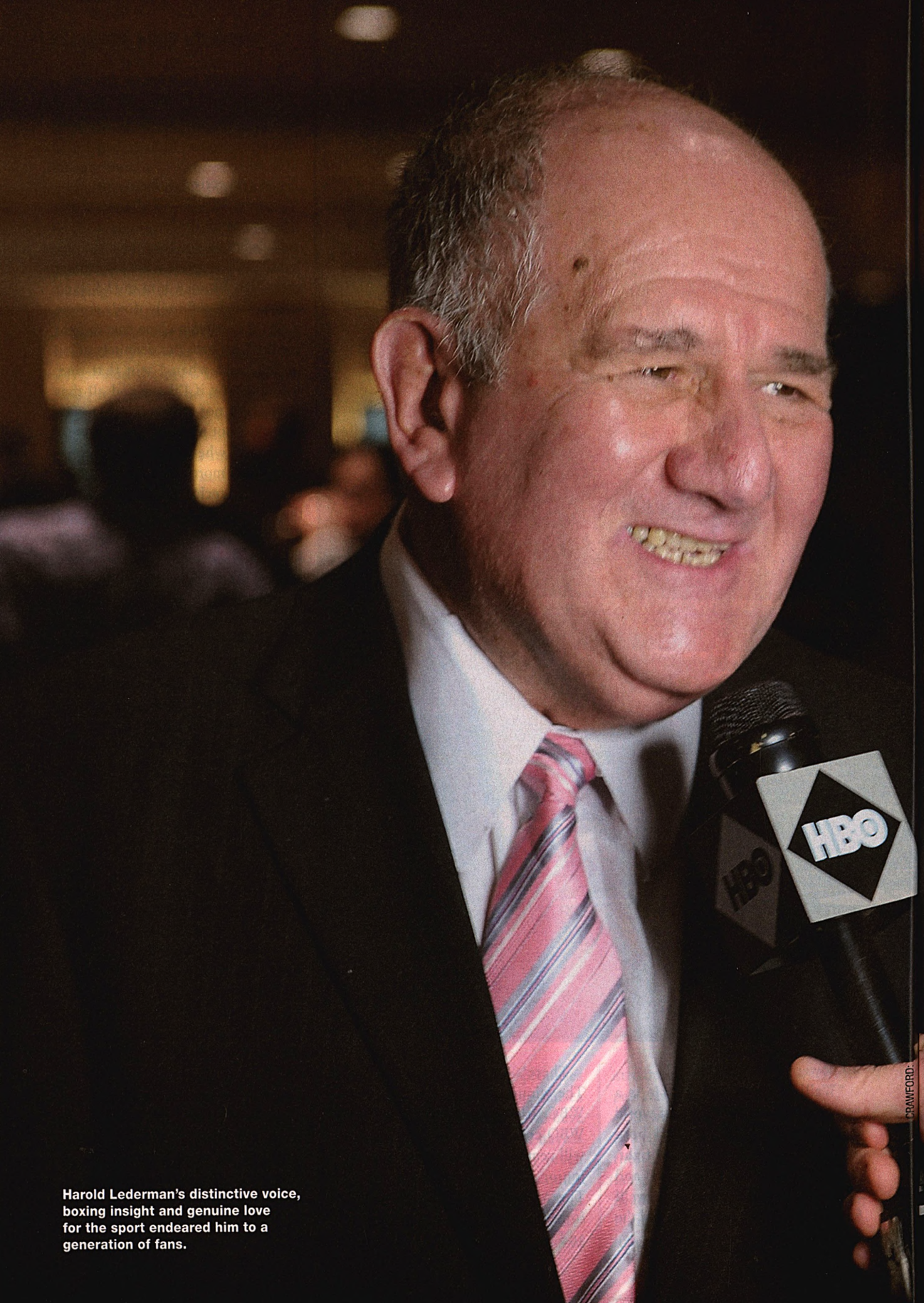
"I'm over the moon at becoming world champion, and I never thought I'd be involved in unification fights so soon. I have the opportunity to become unified (IBF and WBA) champion and get the Ring Magazine belt and the Muhammad Ali trophy as well. That's a lot of hardware to collect in just three fights."

The only winner that's guaranteed in this one is the fans!

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

Taylor showed how dangerous his combination of skill and power is.

STEVE MARCUS



Harold Lederman's distinctive voice, boxing insight and genuine love for the sport endeared him to a generation of fans.

THE PEOPLE'S JUDGE

THOUGH RARELY SEEN ON CAMERA, **HAROLD LEDERMAN** BECAME ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE PEOPLE IN BOXING

By **Michael Rosenthal**

"OK, JIM!"

Utter those two words to anyone who has followed boxing over the past three-plus decades and they'll know exactly what – and who – you're referring to. And they'll almost certainly smile.

That's the legacy of "unofficial official" Harold Lederman, whose high-pitched voice, infectious energy and obvious love of boxing turned a simple segue on HBO broadcasts into an unmistakable – and much imitated – catchphrase and the man himself into something approaching a cult figure.

Lederman, 79, died on May 10 in hospice care near his home outside New York City after a long battle with liver cancer. He leaves behind an enormous number of admirers that might seem disproportionate to his support role on the telecasts, which sometimes totaled less than 60 seconds.

Make no mistake: Harold Lederman had the ability to seize a moment, whether he realized it or not.

"He was one of a kind ... only more so," said Larry Merchant, a colleague of Lederman throughout his tenure at HBO.

Lederman was a pharmacist by trade, but his love of boxing, which was passed on to him by his father, ultimately led him in a more glamorous direction. He started judging amateur bouts in 1965, received his license from the New York State Athletic Commission to work professional fights two years later and was an official scorekeeper until he retired in 1999, working more than 100 championship fights along the way.

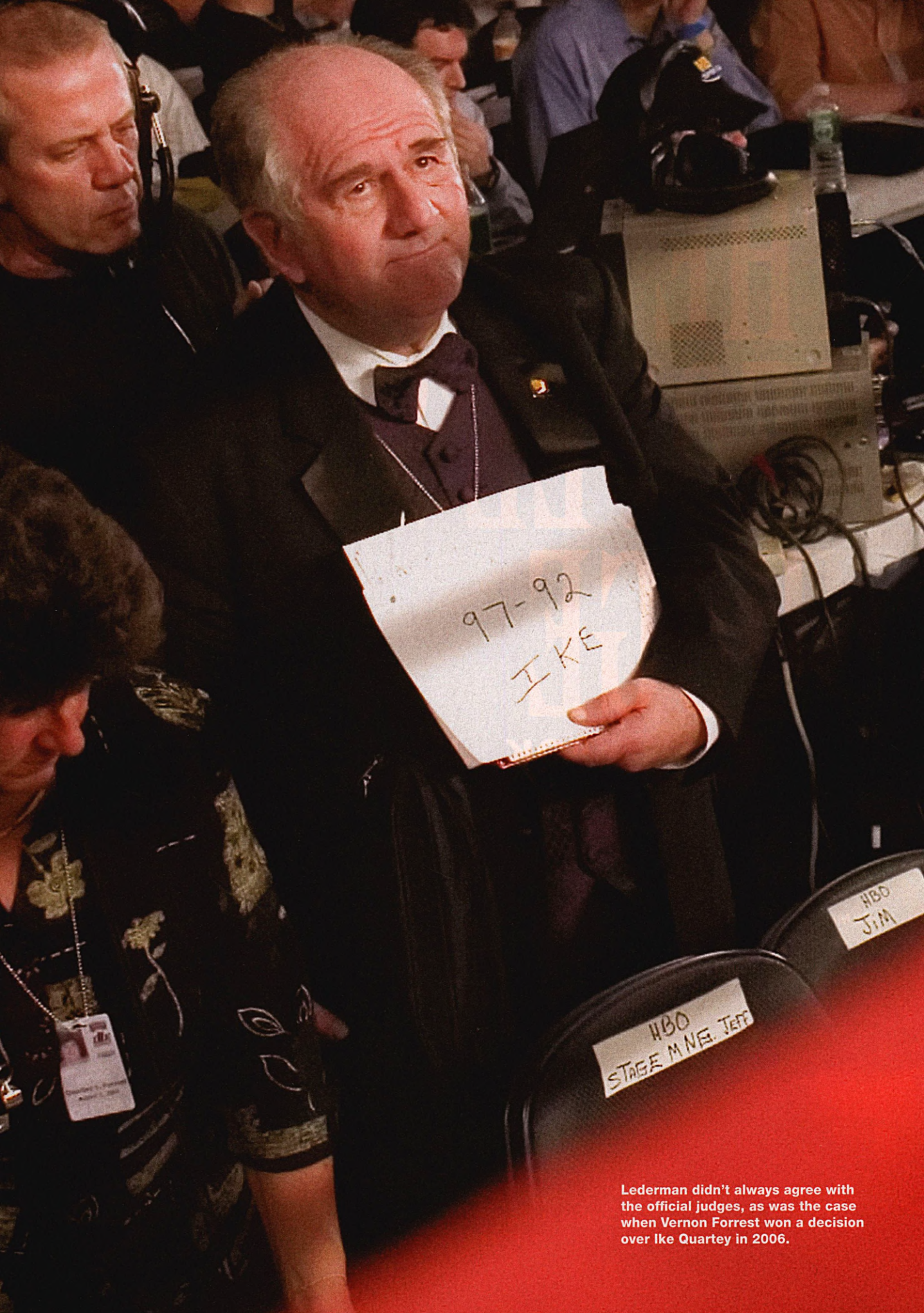
One of the biggest fights he worked was the 15-round third meeting between Muhammad Ali and Ken Norton in 1976 at Yankee Stadium, which Ali won by a close but unanimous decision that was widely criticized afterward.

Lederman, who had it 8-7 in rounds for Ali, defended his scoring in that fight both at the time and as recently as a few years ago. He always believed in his own ability.

"People always say that Ali was mesmerizing the judges, which wasn't the truth," he said in an ESPN radio interview in 2016. "Ali-Norton was about as close a fight as I've ever seen in my life. Norton got bad advice when his corner told him he was ahead after 14 rounds, and all he did was coast in the 15th round and Ali outboxed him."

Ross Greenburg, the former executive producer of HBO Sports, came up with the idea of hiring a scorekeeper for boxing telecasts in 1986. He knew of Lederman's work as a judge and decided to feel him out.

"I was always looking for innovative ways to cover boxing,"



Lederman didn't always agree with the official judges, as was the case when Vernon Forrest won a decision over Ike Quartey in 2006.

'HE WAS ONE OF A KIND ... ONLY MORE SO.' - LARRY MERCHANT

Greenburg said. "Microphones in fighters' corners, overhead cameras, simultaneous translation of Spanish in the corner, things like that. Only ringside announcers were giving their views of fights at that time. I thought to myself, 'Doesn't it make more sense to hire a judge to sit with the announcers and give his scorecard?'

"So I organized a meeting with Harold, just to meet him and see whether he would want to do this. He jumped at the opportunity. We gave him a microphone and instructions to come in every third or fourth round and give his opinion on where the fight was at that moment. He was a natural, to be honest. I would've taken him off the air after the first time if I didn't think it worked. He fit right in. And the rest is history."

Lederman crammed his score totals and commentary into about 20 seconds in each of his segments – almost always off camera – yet became as recognizable as the other members of the broadcast team, including lead blow-by-blow commentator and close friend Jim Lampley.

Of course, part of Lederman's appeal was his credibility as a judge. Viewers didn't always agree with his scoring, but the majority of them evidently believed he gave an educated and honest take on what was happening in the ring.

"Harold scored fights by who he felt was in control, who dictated what was going on in the ring. I loved that," said Roy Jones Jr., who worked with Lederman as an HBO analyst.

Said Merchant: "He was able to separate his enthusiasm for the game from what he actually saw happening. He didn't let his eyes lie to him, which is the perfect perspective for a judge. No matter what he thought, what he'd seen before or what he anticipated, he was able to see just what was in front him on the night of the fight."

Lederman's appeal would've been limited had it ended with the substance of his commentary, however. It was that unmistakable voice, the Bronx-inspired delivery and the over-the-top but somehow genuine enthusiasm that made him one of the most unforgettable characters in the history of the sport.

Everyone seemed to know him, even casual fans. Promoter Lou DiBella, who was an executive at HBO during Lederman's tenure, said he was taken aback by the number of people who reached out to him after his friend's death. To DiBella, that reaction was clear evidence that Lederman touched an inordinate number of people.

"I think more people texted me about Harold's death than anyone's except Ali's. That says something," DiBella said.

And the fans obviously loved him. He would routinely be mobbed when he walked through hotel lobbies during fight week, always taking time to say hello, sign autographs or just talk boxing. He loved talking boxing. As Lampley put it, "He was a warm and loveable friend not only to those in his life but also those who knew him on their TV screen."

Indeed, he evolved into a bigger public figure than most of the fighters he judged at ringside. And, remarkably, he never intended for that to happen. He was just being Harold Lederman. That was more than enough.

"I've been in close proximity to a lot of big-name people, from Howard Cosell to George Foreman to O.J. Simpson and others," Lampley said. "And in every instance, these people achieved their particular identity at least partially through their own efforts. They constructed a method or platform that made them bigger and bigger over time.

"Harold is the only larger-than-life figure I know of who achieved his fame organically, through the nature of his personality. He didn't want or need the attention. He was just being Harold. And in doing so he became a big personality like the others I mentioned. That's one of the most striking things I've seen in my career."

The last few years, as he struggled with his disease, were difficult for Lederman and those close to him. His colleagues at HBO could only hope that he would be healthy enough to take part in the network's final boxing broadcast this past December 8.

He reportedly was too ill to travel toward the end, which forced him to provide his commentary from a studio near his home. Lampley and the others would rather have had him at ringside, where he'd spent so much time, but they were grateful he was with them in any capacity.

"There were two black clouds in the last two years of our telecasts," Lampley said. "One was how long we would be on the air in our situation, (with) the network being sold to an entity that wasn't enthusiastic about boxing. The second black cloud was whether Harold would be able to keep his illness at bay long enough to make it to the finish line. Roy and Max (Kellerman) and I were very concerned about that. It would've been a terrible blow to our legacy as a telecast if we had to replace Harold with three or four months to go. It was critical that he make it to the end. And he did.

"If we still had our telecast, we could've found someone with credibility as a scorer to replace him. I know what it's like to follow a larger-than-life personality in a role, though. I was the next person to do the *Monday Night Football* halftime highlights after Howard Cosell relinquished the job. I wouldn't have wished that on anybody.

"It would've been just as difficult, just as damaging, to try to replace Harold Lederman."

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

BERT COOPER FOUGHT AT THE FRINGE OF GREATNESS FOR MUCH OF HIS CAREER, BUT SELF-SABOTAGE WAS HIS DOWNFALL

By **Lee Groves**

When Bert Cooper first walked into the Philadelphia gym owned by his idol, "Smokin'" Joe Frazier, in 1982, the legend took one look at the teenager and saw plenty of himself. Physically, Cooper was almost a carbon copy; he was short for a person of his poundage, but his powerful torso and heavily muscled legs suggested he could generate the kind of power Frazier once used to rule the land of the giants. That suggestion became truth the moment Frazier saw Cooper hit something, and, in that moment, a bond was formed. Frazier invited Cooper into his world, gave him his old nickname and launched what looked to be a promising career for the native of Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania.

"Joe Frazier took me under his wing and gave me the name 'Smokin','" Cooper told writer Thad Moore in 2015. "When I went there, I showed up with no socks, no boots. I was only 17. Joe saw he had something special. Joe told me I was a bad dude. He saw that I could bang."

Could he ever. Every time Cooper stepped inside a ring, he possessed the potential to end any fight with one swing of his wrecking ball fists. Unfortunately for Cooper, his tumultuous life beyond the ropes intruded on that potential, and, as a result, he never became the champion that many thought he could have been. An encouraging start soon turned sour in terms of his boxing career, his

When at his best during the late '80s/early '90s, Cooper could threaten even top heavyweights.

HOLLY STEIN /ALLSPORT

relationship with Frazier (in whose honor he had the word "Smoke" tattooed on his neck) and with his life away from the sport, which was plagued by drug addiction. That life ended May 10 following a brief battle with pancreatic cancer, and given how long ago his best days were, it's almost impossible to believe he was just 53 when he died.

His roller-coaster boxing career lasted three days short of 28 years – more than half his lifespan. He started it with an 88-second knockout over Dennis Caldwell on September 11, 1984, and ended it with a second-round TKO loss to Carl Davis on September 8, 2012 – and everything in between screamed drama, adventure and, from time to time, exasperation.

"There's two faces of Bert Cooper," George Foreman said of Cooper in 1991. "One is the guy who could come out and whip anybody. If you give him enough room, he'll run you out of that ring. And the other ... you just don't know."

Cooper stopped his first eight opponents and advanced his record to 10-0 (9 KOs) before giving the world the first glimpse of the darker moments to come. In a fight nationally televised by ESPN in January 1986, he faced Reggie Gross, a prohibitive underdog who took the bout on four days' notice. Cooper gunned for the early KO, but Gross purposely focused on defense in order to empty the youngster's gas tank. Late in Round 3, Cooper's energy started to sag and Gross got in more than his share of counters. By the eighth, Cooper was running on fumes, and though he led 7-0 on one card and 6-1 on the other two, he couldn't make it to the finish line. Following a strong start to the round by Cooper – perhaps a last gasp – Gross landed a barrage that included a right uppercut to the tip of the nose that caused Cooper to turn his back and stagger toward the ropes near his own corner, prompting referee Rudy Battle to administer a standing eight count. When Battle asked Cooper if he wanted to continue, Cooper gave the one answer that would have been unthinkable to his mentor and chief second, Joe Frazier: "No."

With that, Cooper's undefeated record was gone forever, and it would be the first of many bad nights to come, as his career record of 38-25 (31 KOs) would attest. Some of those nights came against a slew of fighters who had or would hold championships, such as Foreman (KO by 2), Nate Miller (KO by 6), Riddick Bowe (KO by 2), Mike Weaver (L 10), Corrie Sanders (KO by 3) and Chris Byrd (L 10). As time went on, he would log losses to notables like Larry Donald (KO by 7), Joe Mesi (KO by 7), Everett Martin (L 10), Fres Oquendo (L 10), Alexander Zolkin (KO by 9), Samson Po'uha (KO by 4), Derrick Jefferson (KO by 2), Darroll Wilson (KO by 4), Jeremy Williams (L DQ 7) and Luis Ortiz (KO by 2) as well as more obscure foes such as Anthony Green (L 8) and Chauncey Welliver (L 10).

Some of Cooper's "Ls" and "KO bys" were covered in glory. His seventh-round defeat to Carl "The Truth" Williams in June 1987 was a Closet Classic, as was his pulsating 12-round decision loss to Ray Mercer in August 1990. But his most celebrated near misses came in his only two world title fights – against undisputed champion Evander Holyfield in November 1991, then against Michael Moorer for the vacant WBO title nearly six months later.

Holyfield was originally set to meet Mike Tyson in Las Vegas on November 8, but a Tyson rib injury forced that fight to be canceled. Not wanting to waste a full training cycle, Holyfield signed to face Francesco Damiani in Atlanta on November 23, but the former WBO titlist had to withdraw due to an ankle injury. Desperate to find a credible opponent on six days' notice, Cooper was summoned. At first, the fight followed form as Holyfield floored the 32-1 underdog with a hook to the belly 80 seconds into the fight, but 55 seconds into Round 3, a Cooper right ignited an 11-punch barrage that turned "The Real Deal" into "The Reel Deal" as he fell forward into the ropes. Referee Mills Lane called a "but-for-the-ropes" knockdown – the first count given to Holyfield since he faced Jakey Winter in the Golden Gloves in 1980.

Suddenly, Cooper was within a whisper of not only becoming the heavyweight champion of the world, but also supplanting Buster Douglas as the owner of the biggest upset in boxing history – if not the biggest upset in the history of sports.

But it was not to be. Holyfield survived the round, thanks to a series of crunching uppercuts, then stopped Cooper in Round 7 with an animalistic 25-punch assault that moved Lane to intervene.

Cooper's heroic showing against Holyfield earned him a second title shot against Moorer for the WBO title vacated by Mercer. And, once again, Cooper brought his best as he floored the 28-0 (26 KOs) Moorer in the first and second rounds and, entering the fifth, was tied on one scorecard and ahead by one point on the other two. But Moorer, who floored Cooper in Round 1, had the final word as a vicious assault capped by a right uppercut-left cross drove Cooper to the floor and, once he arose, rendered him too dizzy to continue.

While Cooper couldn't secure a third title fight, he sprung surprises against more than a few "A-sides," like Orlin Norris (KO 8), Willie de Wit (KO 2), the 14-1 Anthony Wade (KO 8), Joe Hipp (KO 5), bare-knuckle legend Joe Savage (KO 1), the 18-0 Richie Melito (KO 1) and the 36-1-2 Tony Fulilangi (KO 4).

If there's one word that best describes Cooper, it is "mercurial." Inside the ring, he either got you or you got him, and his life outside the ring was also hammer-and-tong.

In his final days, Cooper was seeking someone to write his life story, and while he didn't live to make the final choice, that scribe will have quite the tale to chronicle.

Cooper's life may have lasted just 53 years, but one can say that most of his days – good or bad – were lived to their maximum. RING

BREAK IT UP

GENNADY GOLOVKIN'S SURPRISING SPLIT FROM LONGTIME TRAINER **ABEL SANCHEZ** PROVED THAT THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS SO ROSY IN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FIGHTER-TRAINER DUOS

By **Don Stradley**

Abel Sanchez's partnership with Gennady Golovkin, which preceded the middleweight star's association with Tom Loeffler, ended shortly after Golovkin's 37th birthday.

INSET: AP/NICK POTTS

The relationship between a fighter and his trainer is perhaps the most sacred in boxing. At one time it was so revered that the death of Charley Goldman inspired a rumor that he'd been discovered in his hotel room wearing the robe of his most famous fighter, Rocky Marciano. It wasn't true, but many believed it. That's how strong the link was between fighters and trainers. However, the recent split involving Gennady Golovkin and Abel Sanchez shows that boxers and their coaches are hardly inseparable. This is especially true when money is concerned.

Golovkin allegedly showed up at Sanchez's gym in Big Bear, California, and, like a spouse who has silently planned his exit, simply grabbed his gear and told Sanchez he'd be training elsewhere. The gobsmacked trainer

said later there was nothing he could do but wish Golovkin luck. It was eventually revealed that the two couldn't agree on how much Sanchez was to be paid, and that Golovkin's new coach would be Johnathon Banks.

There came in the following weeks terse comments from both parties. Golovkin said his move was simply a business decision. Much more candid was Sanchez, saying that Golovkin had been like a son to him. Sanchez told the *Behind the Gloves* YouTube channel, "It's unfortunate that fighters get to a certain point when it's all 'I' and not 'we.'" Golovkin has since then seemed all smiles, thinking perhaps of the dollars he'll save by dumping Sanchez and hiring Banks.

That Golovkin left Sanchez on the heels of signing a $100 million contract with DAZN suggests that they were never as close as we thought. It's hard to imagine this sort of split happening in boxing's long-ago past, when trainers and fighters were indeed more like father and son. Would Joe Louis have left Jack Blackburn? Would Willie Pep dump Bill Gore? Granted, those relationships may have been the exception and not the rule, but in those days, a trainer was more than a trainer. He was also a cut man, dietician, bucket carrier, psychologist, strategist and sometimes a de facto manager. Firing a trainer back then meant losing a foundation of knowledge and support. Even Muhammad Ali, as mercurial and moody as any athlete who has ever lived, stayed loyal to Angelo Dundee. Then again, Dundee himself would later be involved in a split that was even more startling than l'affaire Golovkin.

It had appeared to outsiders that Dundee and Sugar Ray Leonard were one of history's golden pairings. There'd been cracks in the partnership, though. The trainers who toiled in the gym with Leonard were Janks Morton and Dave Jacobs, while Dundee concerned himself with picking Leonard's opponents, discussing strategy and leading Leonard's corner during fights. Dundee once addressed the subject by saying, "I'm not a sweat wiper." In 1987, after Leonard's split decision win over Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Dundee was unhappy with his meager 1 percent cut (about $150,000). Declaring that he always earned 5 percent, he demanded that his own attorney negotiate future payments. When Leonard's camp refused to do business that way, Dundee was gone. Leonard claimed to be disappointed but didn't go out of his way to retain Dundee's services.

Though fighters had replaced trainers before, the announcement that Leonard and Dundee had split was a shocker. If a respected figure such as Dundee wasn't guaranteed job security, no trainer was safe. And though it's unfair to lay the blame on Leonard, it seemed that the coming years saw many fighters following his example. Though money was often the issue, there was also a sense that if a fighter lost in the ring, someone had to be punished. Boxing had moved into an era where a single defeat could have an enormous impact on a fighter's future income; trainers, inevitably, took the hit.

"Trainers are scapegoats," said Joe Goossen, who has worked with many top fighters and endured his share of breakups. "Most trainers don't have contracts. The norm is a handshake deal, from fight to fight. You may think you have a great relationship with a fighter, but he thinks the grass is greener somewhere else. The fighter doesn't understand that if a trainer has taken him from the prelims to the big dance, from zero to hero, that's a great trainer."

Like Sanchez's split with Golovkin, Angelo Dundee left Sugar Ray Leonard's team when they couldn't agree on payment.

Goossen's most troubling separation was with Michael Nunn in 1990. At the time, Nunn was 35-0, the IBF middleweight titleholder and a candidate for stardom. The breakup came when Nunn signed with a new promoter; he left Goossen and his brother, Dan, who had been Nunn's promoter for years, far behind and didn't look back. There was more than a little acrimony. Oddly enough, Nunn ended up with Dundee. "It wasn't good, I'll tell you that," Goossen said.

Ironically, Goossen was hired to provide color commentary for one of Nunn's next fights, which turned out to be a dramatic KO loss to James Toney. Adding to Goossen's discomfort was that he had to interview Nunn after the bout for the pay-per-view audience. "It was heartbreaking, in a way," said Goossen. "All of my work was undone."

A decade later saw the ugly falling-out between Prince Naseem Hamed and Brendan Ingle. The disintegration of that team may be hard to surpass for pure rancor. Ingle had taken Hamed under his wing as a child and groomed him into a boxing phenomenon. But as Hamed's star rose, so did his bratty behavior. When journalist Nick Pitt asked Ingle to comment on Hamed for his book, *The Paddy and the Prince*, Ingle depicted Hamed as a money-hungry bully. Not surprisingly, Ingle was soon presented with a significant cut in pay. Ingle turned it down. And that was the end of Hamed and Ingle. The deposed trainer told the U.K. Guardian, "Four more fights and he's finished." Ingle was right, more or less.

The problem was very typical of all fighter-trainer dramas. Hamed felt his talents were unique and that he could've walked into any boxing gym and become a superstar regardless of who coached him. Ingle, meanwhile, had sacrificed many years to transform Hamed from a street urchin into a champion. Ultimately, it seemed that neither man truly respected the other – or appreciated what they had created together.

Even Eddie Futch, as esteemed as any trainer has ever been, found himself at odds with fighters now and then. He told author Ronald K. Fried in 1990 that fighters "manufacture reasons to dislike you." Ingratitude, Futch added, was "part of the scene." Futch's split from Ken Norton in 1973 came when Norton's management objected to Futch signing on as Joe Frazier's full-time trainer. Norton's braintrust feared, with some justification, that to train two top heavyweights was a conflict of interest. Forced to make a decision, Futch went with Frazier. Norton later claimed that letting Futch go was "the biggest mistake of my career." Futch called his split with Norton "a bitter separation."

Few splits between fighter and trainer were as surprising as the one between Bernard Hopkins and Bouie Fisher. Fisher had been a steady presence in Hopkins' life since 1988, but their working relationship was shattered in 2002 when Fisher sued Hopkins for $255,000 in back pay. They worked out their differences, but Fisher sued Hopkins again in 2005, claiming this time he was owed $200,000. At one point during the second breakup, Fisher told the Philadelphia Daily News, "When it comes to money, Bernard wants it all for himself." Around that time, Hopkins told the media, "I love Bouie like a father ... Sometimes things happen and you have to do what you have to do." They never did patch things up.

Maybe all of this talk about fathers and sons is the real problem. Are these splits only about money? Or are they a matter of a young man showing a father figure who is truly in charge? The Freudian aspects of fighter-trainer relationships are certainly tempting to explore, but there's no evidence that Golovkin and Sanchez were struggling with any deep-rooted problems. Goossen told The Ring, "Golovkin still wanted Abel to train him; he just didn't want to pay him. Abel took a stand. If Golovkin had really disliked Abel's methods or wanted someone else, he would've just left instead of making the low offer."

Still, the implied message Golovkin sent to his coach of nine years was as unpleasant as a left hook to the mouth: Just because I'm making more money, it doesn't mean you'll get a raise. It's a message that fighters have been sending to trainers with greater and greater frequency. Perhaps fighters have to be a bit cold-blooded to survive in this rough occupation, and that cold mindset influences their decision-making.

Whether or not money is the real hitch or just a symptom of other issues, the result is that trainers are made to look dispensable. Maybe, as Golovkin has said, it's all just business. But if Goossen is an example of how a trainer reacts to these splits – talking about Nunn still bothers him – Sanchez may not instantly recover from Golovkin's departure.

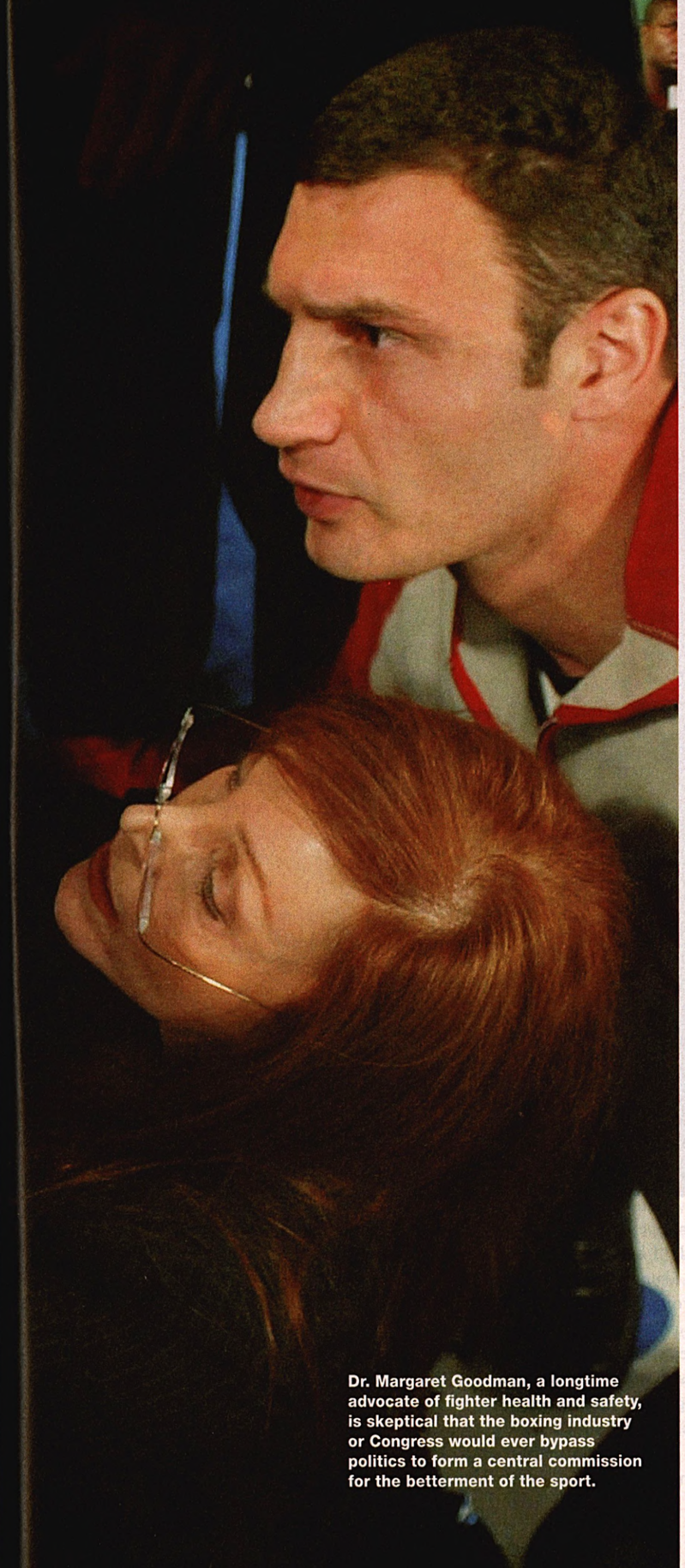
"You think about the time you invested in this fighter," Goossen said. "You try to separate your personal feelings from it. But believe me, it has long-lasting effects.

"If Abel Sanchez feels like I did, he's upset." RING

DREAMING A DREAM

WITH THE BOXING WORLD HOBBLED BY POLITICS, THE FORMATION OF A CENTRAL COMMISSION MAKES TOO MUCH SENSE TO ACTUALLY HAPPEN

By **Tris Dixon**



Dr. Margaret Goodman, a longtime advocate of fighter health and safety, is skeptical that the boxing industry or Congress would ever bypass politics to form a central commission for the betterment of the sport.

Beneath the layers of bureaucracy, the emboldened political statements and the common sentiment that everyone wants the sport to thrive lies something very simple.

Two men or women try to punch each other into defeat.

It is one of the sporting world's oldest pursuits, fighting, right up there with running and jumping.

But this is not a history lesson, though the subject matter – boxing's need for an international, centralized, impartial commission – has been visited before.

Because as simple as the very nature of boxing is, it operates in a ridiculously complex landscape, shackled by powerful individuals and old-school organizations without any convincing oversight.

It means that the game has more than its share of groundhog days in relation to licensing, fights not being made, suspensions and rankings.

One commission, as soccer has with FIFA, could sweep many of those issues away, providing it was set up and delivered with the good of the sport in mind.

Imagine a world where drug punishments were met with universal disapproval and bans had to be served globally. Imagine this wonderful paradise where commissions and countries could share medical data, so a fighter who was not allowed to box in one country was, for his own good, not allowed to fight anywhere. Imagine a world where the top 10 was the top 10 and it could not be influenced via lobbying or anything more sinister, but was decided upon by merit.

There are so many obvious reasons why it should happen, but too many reasons why it won't.

Dr. Margaret Goodman has always wanted what is best for boxers, firstly on the Nevada State Athletic Commission and now as a president of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA). If ever boxing fell under an umbrella organization, she is the type of person it would need at the helm.

Yet she sees nothing changing, despite the many benefits for almost all concerned.

"For the same reason as most things: politics," she said when asked why. "I think that in most instances, whenever it has come close to getting voted on nationally through Congress, various lobbyists have stopped it for a number of reasons, and

they may change depending on the climate and when it's coming before Congress. I know some commissions don't want that kind of an oversight; they're afraid that they'll lose their piece of the pie. I know there have been many politicians that have gotten information from specific commissions to not allow something like that to happen. I think even several years ago when (Arizona senator John) McCain was trying to get it, he was somewhat out of favor at that point and that Congress itself wouldn't go along with it, and it got voted down. It's all politics."

She believes a body charged with running the sport would also add layers of credibility, something boxing has often struggled with.

"Some of the bigger state commissions that have more boxing events or more high-profile events, they don't want someone telling them what to do. And so the concern would be that if ever there was a federal oversight or national, they don't want to lose that control ... That's the last thing that they want," she said.

So who would benefit from one overseeing organization?

"I think everyone would," Dr. Goodman considered. "I think there's a lot of fear about it, but I think everyone would, because then there would be synchronization of medical results, licensure ... fighters wouldn't get lost in the shuffle. I think that fighters who have a big losing record that need to be suspended permanently or fighters that need longer suspensions, changes in their suspensions or different medical requirements, there would be that uniformity. So I think even though there's that fear of it, in the end it would be beneficial."

And going one further than a national commission in the U.S., former world heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko has made calls for a global entity. Again, Dr. Goodman was doubtful.

"An international body would be the ultimate, but that's never going to happen, not in my lifetime," she said. "I hope they prove me wrong, but I sure don't see it. I just don't see anyone carrying the torch for it at this point in time. And the problem is when there's a serious injury, a death or a fighter gets hospitalized like Magomed (Abdusalamov), everyone gets up in arms for a week or two and the media puts attention on it, and then it fades away and everything goes back to like it was before."

Lack of consistent penalties for PED use could result in Jarrell Miller's return to the ring by the end of 2019.

Robert Smith, general secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control, does not see things changing either.

While the WBA may have decided

not to rank Jarrell Miller for a mere six months after three failed VADA tests ahead of his scheduled June fight with Anthony Joshua, he could still – feasibly – pick up a license in America's Midwest or even in Europe while serving a ban from another commission. That said, it was later discovered that Miller's license had expired, so that's another issue altogether and another example of the murky cracks through which a guilty boxer can fall.

"The difficulty we have is that each country looks after itself," said Smith. "Even in America, there's not an American Board of Control; every state looks after itself, so each state has different rules with regards to medicals, how they deal with anti-doping ... so I think one body would be very helpful."

It has been well documented how fight doctors in the U.S. might not be able to hear a visiting boxer slurring their words because they do not speak Spanish, for example, and the same applies with Eastern Europeans fighting in the United Kingdom. One overall federation, with a database of medical records that could be shared internationally, would make fighters far safer.

The BBBofC works with other bodies, both sanctioning and governing.

"We had a boxer whose license was withdrawn on medical grounds," Smith continued, using a recent example. "The boxer went to another country, got a license, and then on behalf of the board I told the organization that there was a problem. I sent the doctor's recommendation, but I needed the boxer's permission to do so."

Fighters can hide behind doctor-patient confidentiality, and whether doctors have a duty of care to report findings concerning a damaged boxer is another argument.

The BBBofC is testing more fighters for PEDs than ever before, both in and out of competition. But again, there are problems on that front.

"Ultimately we can only suspend someone in this country," said Smith. "We can certainly inform other federations that somebody has been banned, but in theory they can go and apply for a license somewhere else. So that is where the sport falls down."

And, say, a fighter like Miller applies to fight in the U.K. but has been banned and has served that ban elsewhere. Then what?

"We would have to take on board what the punishment was and what the commission had done," Smith explained. "And if any boxer wasn't suspended or the ban had been served, it would make it difficult to stop someone boxing over here on an overseas license and giving them a permit. If they'd served a suspension by their home commission, we have to accept that they've done their job properly. The whole drug thing is a minefield."

Trainer and manager Adam Booth can also see benefits of one organization calling the shots but fears that greed dictates that it not only won't happen in the near future, but that boxing's die has been permanently cast.

"Wouldn't it be lovely to live in a world of peace and harmony, where everyone is equal and we lived in a utopia? But it's not the case," he said. "We live in a capitalist society, and the boxing business is a capitalist business. And all of the elements involved, from fighters to managers to promoters, are all profit-making organizations. So what might be best for the sport isn't necessarily what's good for each individual's business."

There are other positives that living under one roof could bring, however – not the least of which would be a body ruling on contracts between coaches, managers and fighters.

For Booth, the hopes of changing the current structure would lie in the unlikely hands of a wealthy fan, a philanthropist who could streamline the sport, virtually ridding it of its multiple organizations.

"I think it would have to be an incredibly wealthy individual with an intense love of the sport who wants to see it dealt with in the right way, having enough money to have the influence to get all the moving elements to sign into his philosophy," said Booth. "But with a business, everything has a price. And short of an individual having a ridiculous amount of money to buy in all the fractured elements ... no, I never see that happening, because I don't think that individual exists."

You can dare to dream of a world where a fighter who is caught taking EPO is banned for a lengthy spell across the board, where a fighter who has taken too much acute damage and is at risk of chronic damage down the line is saved from himself. And even where, as former WBO heavyweight titleholder Shannon Briggs hopes, a league is formed with the purpose of the best routinely fighting the best.

"Just like NFL, MLB and all, the promoters would work in a league and have fighters instead of teams," said Briggs. "You'd have year-round fights scheduled, so this one's fighting this one ... "

It is surely too good to be true. But the fighters deserve better than what they currently have, and so do the fans.

"I think if the right people were overseeing it with the right intentions, I think it could be huge," Dr. Goodman concluded. "It could benefit all the fighters. I was talking to someone who works with the NFL and the NHL – and baseball is a prime example – and they have players' unions and they can negotiate with the league in making recommendations and changes or they can say they're not going to play. And if everyone had the right intentions and wants to do the right thing, I think it would be nice if fighters had more say over their futures and the rules and regulations that oversee their sport."

It would indeed. But for now, boxing's ever-frustrating status quo is going nowhere.

Jose Ramirez is as committed to worthy causes outside of boxing as he is tenacious inside the ring.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHTS

WHILE HE BATTLES FOR MORE TITLES INSIDE THE RING, **JOSE RAMIREZ** IS PUTTING HIS RISING FAME TO GOOD USE

By **Anson Wainwright**

ED. JONES

Jose Ramirez made his second successful defense of the WBC 140-pound title when he turned back a spirited effort from Jose Zepeda on February 10, overcoming a slow start to grind out a majority decision at a packed Save Mart Arena in Fresno, California.

But as well as beating up contenders, Ramirez is helping to raise some much-needed awareness. The Ramirez-Zepeda event was centered around cancer, something which recently affected his life and that of his handler, Rick Mirigian.

"My manager currently has his mother fighting cancer, and I lost both of my grandparents through cancer," said Ramirez, who has visited families at the Community Cancer Institute in nearby Clovis and auctioned off his gloves, shorts and shoes from the Zepeda fight to benefit the treatment center, which also received a portion of ticket sales.

"Sometimes fights are won through the

mental process, so creating a positive movement that reminds people that every moment counts makes a lot of these fighters (cancer patients) feel supported and motivated to continue pushing forward. Raising funds will also help a lot with treatments or family members who have no option but to miss work to be there next to their loved ones. Cancer doesn't just hit the individual, it hits the heart of the family."

Mirigian came up with the innovative idea because he wanted to do something positive for his mother.

"It meant the world to me," said Mirigian. "I promoted that event for 90 days and nights. To do 14,034 people on a Sunday afternoon was historic. Then to do a great TV rating (on ESPN), averaging 655,000, against the Grammys was even better.

"Bringing awareness to cancer helping a lot of people with the show was the key. ESPN really got behind the promotion and event. I got to truly honor my mom, and Ramirez got the win and brought us all home in champion form."

This wasn't the kind-hearted titleholder's first good deed.

The 26-year-old son of Mexican immigrants is also involved with helping the farming community in California's Central Valley, where a years-long drought has drawn the state government, environmentalists and largely Latino communities into a battle for clean water.

The local farmers started the California Latino Water Coalition and made Ramirez their spokesperson. That led to a billion dollars of government money spent on building a dam to store water from the rainy season, which helped to ameliorate a water shortage in the area.

"He was a really tremendous spokesperson for that campaign," said his promoter, Bob Arum of Top Rank. "I know he purchased tickets

POTENTIAL TARGETS

Jose Ramirez gives his take on The Ring's Top 10 (as of May 18) at 140 pounds:

1. Regis Prograis 24-0 (20 KOs): "He seems to be the type of guy who is very confident about himself. I think Prograis' lack of defense, the way he commits – which is 'get in first' – may cost him. I haven't seen Prograis fight an all-around good technical fighter that can punch at the same time. He hasn't fought anyone who hits as hard as I do."

2. Josh Taylor 15-0 (12 KOs): "I didn't know too much about Taylor until the tournament started. So far, Taylor has impressed me the most watching him. He has the reach, the movement, he can brawl. Ivan (Baranchyk) was known to be a young bull, and Josh Taylor boxed him very well and put him down a couple of times. Taylor by far has fought better opposition than any of the opposition Prograis has fought. I'm interested to see how Taylor and Prograis is going to play out. If I was Prograis, I'd be in the gym. I wouldn't be getting too carried away with his own hype. I think it's 50-50. If I was going to go by boxing experience and technique, I would have to give the edge to Taylor."

3. Jose Ramirez 24-0 (16 KOs): "My will to go out and perform is second to none. Anybody who faces Jose Ramirez needs to be ready for 12 rounds. And if they're not prepared for 12 rounds, they're going to have a hard time."

4. Maurice Hooker 26-0-3 (17 KOs): "He's one of those fighters who has surprised me – against (Terry) Flanagan and Alex Saucedo. I was there to watch him fight Saucedo; I thought Alex was going to be more active and give Maurice Hooker a harder time, because Maurice has a few draws and I've seen some of his fights and he looked like a flat-footed fighter who needed a lot of work. He got dropped by Saucedo, but got up like a champion and stopped Saucedo. He really impressed me and was a better fighter than I thought he was. That's someone who's not in the tournament and I'd be more than happy and honored to compete against in the near future."

5. Ivan Baranchyk 19-1 (12 KOs): "Ivan seems to be one of those fighters who is aggressive. He goes straight on his offense. So far, he's only shown he's a one dimensional fighter."

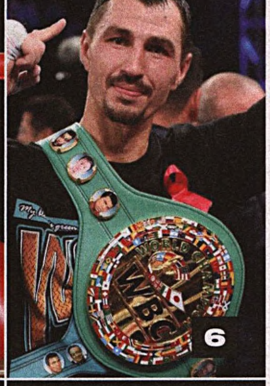
6. Viktor Postol 31-2 (12 KOs): "The question is: Does he still have the will, the fight to compete at this level? There's a lot of hungry 140-pounders."

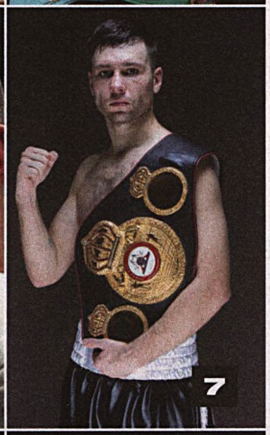
7. Kiryl Relikh 23-3 (19 KOs): "I really don't know much about him. I think Relikh was a little too flat-footed for a guy like Prograis. I wasn't too impressed in Relikh's style."

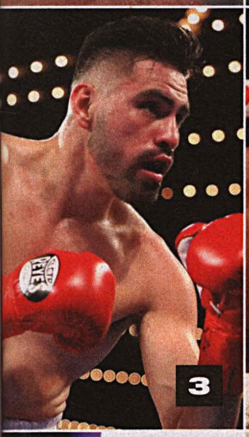
8. Yves Ulysse 18-1 (9 KOs): "I'm not very familiar with him or seen much of him. The 140-pound division is getting better and better; it's stacked and has a lot of potential."

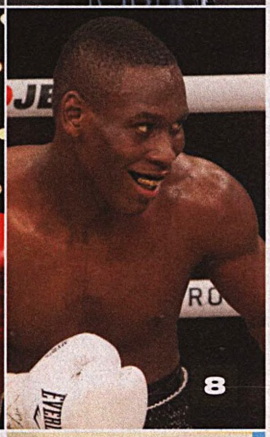
9. Eduard Troyanovsky 27-2 (24 KOs): "I've seen him fight a few times before he lost to (Julius) Indongo in the first round. Sometimes those punches can land in the first round and you're still cold and not warmed up like the later rounds."

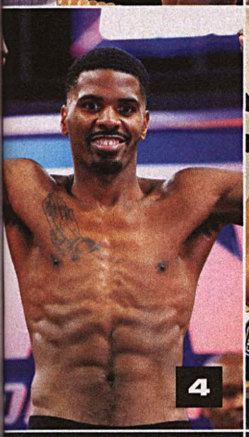
10. Jose Zepeda 30-2 (25 KOs): "He's a very crafty fighter. He's one of those guys who doesn't like to commit; he likes to counterpunch and score points. There's times when a fighter goes in there and we're not at our best, and I think Zepeda fought the best fight he could. But it wasn't my best performance, and I doubt in a rematch with Zepeda he could go 12 rounds with me."

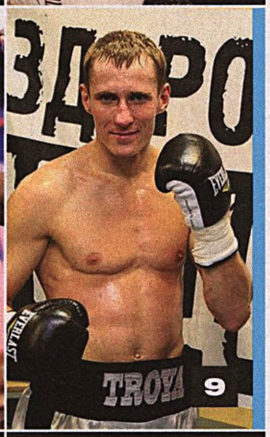


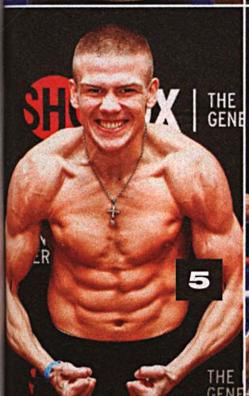












and gave them to the water coalition to help with fundraising. He was very active.

"He became an advocate for immigrant rights, and Jose was part of a movement there to get legislation in California to protect immigration rights. I really admired the stand he took there, and then this cancer event was his and his manager's idea. He is really a young man who has a purpose other than just as an athlete."

Arum thinks Ramirez, being so proactive, could one day lead to a higher calling.

"I would be very, very surprised if Jose didn't run for political office in that area, where he's so extraordinarily popular, and maybe get elected to Congress," said the promoter. "He has that same burning spirit of helping people that Manny (Pacquiao) did in the Philippines."

But before Ramirez sets about achieving other life targets, he has much to do in boxing, and the 140-pound division in which he holds his belt is building nicely into one of the strongest weight classes in the sport. When Terence Crawford abdicated his throne in 2017, the titles were fractured and the division lacked a clear No. 1. However, last year things got back on track when a new generation of fighters stepped up to the plate.

While junior welterweight lacks the big names compared to the glamour divisions, it has something those weight classes don't: depth. As well as a strong top 10, there is an abundance of fighters outside looking in, waiting for their opportunities, as well as a slew of impressive prospects who will in time look to make their own marks.

Ramirez has made his thoughts known on what's next, and now it's up to Top Rank to deliver for its popular young star.

"I want a unification fight against any of the 140-pound champions," said Ramirez.

Arum is on board with that and is open to all options, saying the 2012 Olympian will fight twice more this year. And he doesn't see TV alliances getting in the way.

"I don't see that to be the case," said Arum. "A lot of the 140-pounders are tied up in this (World Boxing Super Series) tournament, and once it ends, they'll be free.

"There's the kid from New Orleans, (Regis) Prograis; he would be a major test for Jose, and a test he wants. (Josh) Taylor is another guy who is a terrific fighter – that would be a very interesting match.

"The WBO champion, Maurice Hooker, is not tied up; we would love a fight against Hooker. Ray Beltran, who was on the card when they fought in Fresno, is a former lightweight champion. He is now at 140; he's a possibility. There's this Russian kid from Saint Petersburg, (Maxim) Dadashev; he fights out of California. He's a terrific 140-pounder. And there are others. I don't see any impediment to fighting the best fighters at 140."

According to Arum, a meeting with one of the best pound-for-pound fighters on the planet could come to fruition in 2020.

"He has a lot of challenges at 140," said Arum. "Then start thinking next year about the possibility of going to welterweight and ultimately, if Terence Crawford continues winning, to face Terence Crawford in a major pay-per-view match at 147."

It's an ambitious proposition. Whatever happens, in one way or another, Ramirez will continue being a champion – one impossible to root against. RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter@AnsonWainwright.

DRIVING FORCE

SENIESA ESTRADA'S EXCEPTIONAL WILLPOWER HAS TAKEN HER FROM TOUGH TIMES TO THE DOORSTEP OF A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Listening to the stories of Seniesa Estrada's travels through the world of professional boxing, it's hard to imagine how the junior flyweight contender managed to make it to a perfect 16-0 record. Yet from two-hour gloved-up waits backstage and warming up in ankle-deep water before a fight in Mexico to the usual obstacles faced by up-and-coming female boxers, no tale beats the one that took place close to home back in 2014.

Facing Blanca Raymundo for the second time, Estrada was 2-0 and garnering some buzz after a solid amateur career. She was expecting to hand a second defeat to Raymundo at the Marconi Automotive Museum in Tustin, California.

So far, so good – at least until the tire on the car she was driving blew out.

"We didn't have a spare tire, so we needed somebody to help us," she recalled. "It was on a Friday at 4 o'clock and there's plenty of cars on the freeway, but this day, because I was fighting and needed to get to the arena, nobody stopped to help us. (laughs) Tow trucks were passing right by us. And that doesn't happen in L.A. People will stop and help you. But it was like, 'Wow, somebody doesn't want us to fight today.'"

An hour passed, then two. Then she got a call telling her that she was about to fight in 15 minutes and she had 10 minutes to show up.

Around this time, someone pulled over, and Joe Estrada, Seniesa's father, asked for the good Samaritan to drive them two exits to the venue.

Estrada looks on as a ringside physician halts her fight with Amarillis Adorno on the undercard of the Ryan Garcia-Jayson Velez fight in May 2018. One year later, the undefeated 108-pound contender finds herself headlining nationally televised cards.

Estrada stopped Adorno in the third round and scored knockouts in her next three bouts.

"I put my uniform and everything on in the back seat of my car," she laughs, noting that they left their vehicle on the freeway. "We got to the arena and my cutman wrapped my hands in five minutes. I put the gloves on, didn't even get to warm up, walked straight into the ring and I got a knockout in the fight."

It's the type of horrific situation that could break lesser fighters, but now Estrada can laugh at it knowing that she's penning quite the tale.

"One day when I'm retired, me, my trainer (Dean Campos) and my dad can look back at these stories and laugh," Estrada said. "Even now we do, because I've come such a long way since I turned pro. We've been through so much, sometimes we just bring stuff up and laugh about it.

"It's cool to have these stories. It makes everything worth it when you're succeeding and you've gone through so much struggle."

Those struggles, while punchlines now, have served a second purpose: to take a talented boxer and make her a fighter who can't be broken by anything that happens in the ring.

"My mental toughness is what makes me the best fighter at 105, 108 and 112, and I know it," said the 26-year-old from the same East L.A. neighborhood that produced her promoter, Oscar De La Hoya. "I just want to continue to win and get all the belts and get all the exposure I can so people can see that. Mental toughness is what makes a fighter stand out. A lot of the fighters back in the day – like Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran and Bernard Hopkins – their mental toughness was insane. Nowadays, you don't really see that in a lot of fighters."

Estrada has it, and even though it's been steeled by her experiences, it could also just be in her blood. It was there the first time she sparred, as an 8-year-old, with a boy expected to beat her up and send her crying out of the gym and out of boxing forever.

"I ended up beating up the boy that I sparred, making him cry, and then he never came back to the gym," said Estrada, who found direction in the ring at the Hollenbeck Youth Center, which kept her from getting swallowed up by the streets of East L.A.

"Boxing kept me busy," she said. "And during my high school years, I was homeschooled because I was traveling a lot for tournaments. It kept me out of all the drinking and partying that my friends and classmates were doing. And not only did boxing help me, but it also saved my dad's life."

Before Estrada began boxing, her father was in and out of prison and addicted to heroin. The only direction from there was down, but his daughter's budding boxing career gave him something to fight for as well.

"Around the time that I started boxing is when he quit, cold turkey," said Estrada. "That usually doesn't happen. He said he prayed to God one night and said, 'I can't do this anymore. I'm gonna end up losing my life, and I want to be there for my daughter.' And he said he woke up the next day and had absolutely no temptation to use drugs or drink alcohol ever again. He wanted to be there for me, and he knew that I needed him for that. He was my only support system with boxing, because my mom didn't want me to box.

"My dad is super proud of me and he's my biggest fan and supporter. I would have quit and gave up a long time ago if it wasn't for him. He kept me going, always pushed me and always taught me to believe in myself. He's a very important part of all of my success."

If it sounds like a story worthy of Hollywood, some other folks agreed, as the story of the Estradas' early years in the boxing game is currently being made into a film to be released in early 2020. Casting is currently underway, with Joe's only request being that whoever plays him "has good hair."

"When I first asked him if I could box, he didn't want to let me, because boxing was for boys," said Estrada. "And my first week or two of training, he put me in the ring to spar with (that) boy because he wanted me to get beat up and cry. That way I would tell him I didn't want to box anymore. From then on, my dad saw the potential in me, so he started training me from the age of 8 until about 17."

That chapter is already in the book, but Estrada's next one in the ring is only gaining steam. Scheduled at press time to headline Golden Boy Promotions' next Thursday Night Fights show in Hollywood on June 13 against Gretchen Abaniel, "Superbad" already has the rest of her year (and years) planned out.

"I'll be fighting for my first world title this year in September," she said. "Within the next three years, I just want to get all the belts I can in my weight division. And not only do I want belts at 108, but I want belts at 105 and 112. I can easily make 105 and 108, and then I can also make 112. Why not just try to get belts and take over each division?"

Mexico's Yesenia Gomez is the WBC junior flyweight titleholder in Estrada's sights for September, and after that, she doesn't have any preference when it comes to who can get it next.

"Everybody who has a belt," said Estrada, her motivation clear. "Besides wanting those belts, I want people to see me fight and beat these champions and get all the belts that I can, because I want people to know that I'm the best. I know it. I don't go around saying it, but I want the world to know it and the world to see it. I want to end my career as the best in my divisions."

By then, it may be time for a second movie. But in the meantime, it's all about boxing, belt collecting and, as the kids say these days, living her best life.

"I'm trying to," she laughs.

WORLD BEAT

Mercurial heavyweight journeyman David Allen's popularity is on the rise with an unlikely win streak.

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

'DONCASTER DE LA HOYA' DAVE ALLEN: DIET COKE, MENSTRUAL CYCLES AND LIVER PUNCHES

Dave Allen is one of Eddie Hearn's journeymen heavyweights. Or at least he WAS. He's in a purple patch right now. Allen, 27 years old, 250 pounds and 6 feet 3 inches tall, drinks Diet Coke between rounds, has ring monikers ranging from "White Rhino" to "Doncaster De La Hoya" and has managed to become one of the most fan-friendly fighters in British boxing. His eccentricity certainly helps. "People look at professional heavyweight boxers and think of Mike Tyson back in 1987, going around looking mean and moody. I'm probably the least intimidating man in the world," Allen explained recently, opening up about his hobbies of Pokémon cards, his Game Boy and "watching videos of wrestling from 1998-2001."

On short notice he has taken fights against some of the very best heavyweights in Dillian Whyte, Luis Ortiz and Tony Yoka. He was considering retirement until he brutally knocked out fellow Brit Nick Webb last year. Allen came out with a huge dose of honesty before his last fight, revealing that a gambling addiction and bouts of depression have been his demons. Indeed, prior to fighting Whyte, Allen says he could not afford to eat properly, nor indeed was he barely making a cent; he claimed that he had only been paid for five of 11 fights he had had a few years back.

"Most boxers say they'd be dead or in jail without the sport. For me, I think I'd be doing 40 hours a week in a warehouse somewhere, miserable, with about six kids by four different women. And through that maybe I'd be dead as well," he explained in an interview with

JUSTIN SETTERFIELD

The Telegraph in which he opened up about his mental health issues, urging other sportsmen to do the same, even describing his mood swings as a type of "male menstrual cycle."

"There used to be a stigma around mental health in sports. We are becoming better and more open, but there's still a long way to go. The human brain is a very funny thing. I'm very much like a woman with a menstrual cycle: three weeks off and then four or five days on. That's very much like my brain. But I'm not ashamed now to tell everyone else what I am."

His openness has brought a new cult following along with success. Last month, Allen secured the greatest triumph of his career when he knocked out Lucas Browne in the third round with a perfect liver punch in the headline act in London. He has teamed up with former middleweight titleholder Darren Barker as his trainer. The following is growing. On July 20, he'll fight David Price on the Dillian Whyte-Oscar Rivas undercard. Victory there, and he might just be able to dream ... even dream big.

★★★

EDDIE HEARN: 'I'M PREPARED TO DIE FOR THE FAMILY BUSINESS'

A "pansy" is not a nice word to describe a man deeply invested in fight sports. But Eddie Hearn is calling himself one. "I grew up thinking I was a hard nut, but I was a pansy," the promoter told me. "Pansy" is defined, as per the Cambridge Dictionary, as "an offensive word for a man who behaves in a way that is considered to be more typical of a woman."

Now, Eddie is being politically incorrect here, and yet simultaneously self-effacing. We may forgive him. He is explaining that he went to an expensive private school, by dint of his father Barry's hard work and success, failed at 16 and went to a school for harder knocks. But in the same breath, Hearn told me he is willing to die for the family business. "I'll give my life for it," he explained in that week of sleeplessly chasing down a new opponent for Anthony Joshua for his Madison Square Garden debut after Jarrell Miller's heinously tainted bodily returns to testers.

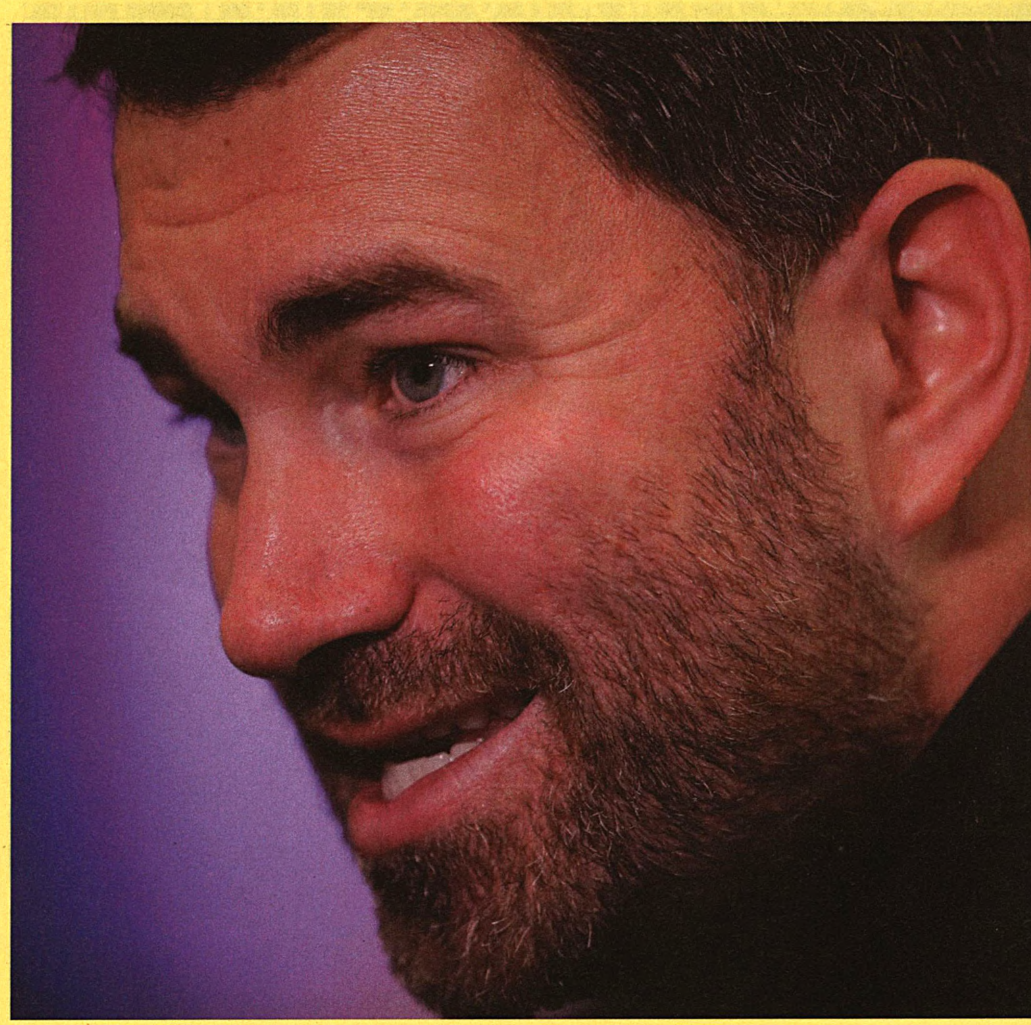
Hearn, with a gift of the gab, an encyclopedic knowledge of the business and a growing ability to troubleshoot, said quite brazenly: "Fighters say they are prepared to die in the ring; I'm prepared to die for the family business."

Hearn is now a workaholic with commitments on both sides of The Pond. "I'm loving it and I live it, and it's everything to me. I'm not an overthinker," he said. "I always joke with my missus (that) I'm a very simple man. I go to work and go home, see the kids and go to sleep. Then I get up and go to work. The problem now is the time zones. I get about three to four hours sleep a night. The trial for me is outperforming my dad. I've always been Barry Hearn's son."

★★★

PUNCHING PREACHER DERRICK OSAZE

Derrick Osaze was crowned winner of Ultimate Boxxer III: The



RICHARD HEATHCOTE

Eddie Hearn admits he's not the hardest of blokes, but the second-generation promoter says he'd give his life for the family business.

Middleweights, a one-night, three-round tournament format gaining leverage in the U.K. The next day, he was preaching a sermon. Osaze, who is known as the "Punching Preacher," defeated favorite Grant Dennis to win the "Gold Robe" and a large share of £50,000 ($64,000) in prize money. "People see it as a double life, but the two coincide," the 25-year-old, who is a minister at his local church, told me. "Boxing's my profession, but me being a minister is based on my faith. I need both of them, because I couldn't operate in boxing without my faith. His ambition now? "100 percent, to meet George Foreman."

The tournament is certainly turning out some genuine prospects. It is the brainchild of Ben Shalom, who plans five shows this year, all to be shown on BT Sport, the same broadcaster with which Tyson Fury, Billy Joe Saunders and others have television deals through promoter Frank Warren. "You only have to look at our last winner, Shakan Pitters," Shalom told me. "He came from absolutely nowhere into the top 10 of light heavyweights in the U.K. off the back of his success, and Dec Spelman fought for the English title off the back of fighting for us. It's about the fights, but also putting them out there."

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The London Telegraph.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

It seems John Riel Casimero can only win titles when he leaves his home country. Of the four times he has won significant belts, interim and world included, all were abroad, while he lost his first title on the scale in Cebu and also suffered a shock defeat to Jonas Sultan in 2017 in the same city.

Casimero once again had the away-from-home court advantage in Carson, California, and put his career back on track by knocking out Ricardo Espinoza in 12th round on April 20 to win the interim WBO bantamweight title. Despite scoring a knockdown in the sixth, Casimero entered the 12th facing a split draw. Then he took matters into his own hands.

"I didn't know I would still be able to knock him down in Round 12, because he is so tough and strong," said Casimero (27-4, 18 KOs). "So when I knocked him down ... I finished it off."

Not bad for a guy whose trainer, Jhun Agrabio, missed the fight due to visa issues and had to adapt to substitute trainer Rodel Mayol in LA.

It was Casimero's U.S. debut and the 10th country overall he has fought in, but few outside Dignity Health Sports Park saw the swing bout, which took place well after the Danny Garcia-Adrian Granados main event ended. Still, the win resurrected the career of the 30-year-old from Ormoc, Leyte, and put him next in line for WBO titleholder Zolani Tete.

Tete, who hasn't made a mandatory defense since facing Omar Narvaez in April 2018, had been locked into the World Boxing Super Series, but that all changed when he withdrew the week of

John Riel Casimero celebrates after beating Amnat Ruenroeng for the IBF flyweight title.

TOM JENKINS

his unification fight with Nonito Donaire with tendonitis in his right shoulder. Once Tete recovers, the WBO is expected to order the fight against Casimero.

"Next time, he'll have a tremendous camp in the U.S. and he'll really be ready," said matchmaker Sean Gibbons. "Don't be shocked if he jacks Zolani Tete on the chin."

★★★

It seems to be really bad luck to fight Donaire in the WBSS. First, Ryan Burnett went down with a back injury in their fight, then Tete withdrew with an injury. Luckily, Stephon Young was on the undercard, world ranked and willing to step in on late notice. Unlucky for him, Donaire still hits really, really hard at 118, as the St. Louis native would find out in Round 6 of their April 27 match in Lafayette, Louisiana. It's easy to forget that, for all of his ups and downs, Donaire is unbeaten as a bantamweight. He'll face Naoya Inoue in the final.

★★★

Manny Pacquiao has his opponent for his second fight under the PBC banner: Keith Thurman. The fight is set for pay-per-view on July 20 at the MGM Grand, but the matchup had been rumored for some time. It figures to be the most dangerous opposition for Pacquiao in several years, considering that Thurman is 10 years younger at 30, undefeated and, with 22 KOs in 29 wins, a heavy puncher. But the Floridian has also had to deal with inactivity due to elbow and hand injuries, missing all of 2018, and looked vulnerable in a majority decision win over Josesito Lopez in January.

It might turn out to be a smart gamble for Pacquiao, but it's still unclear what the endgame is for him fighting beyond 40.

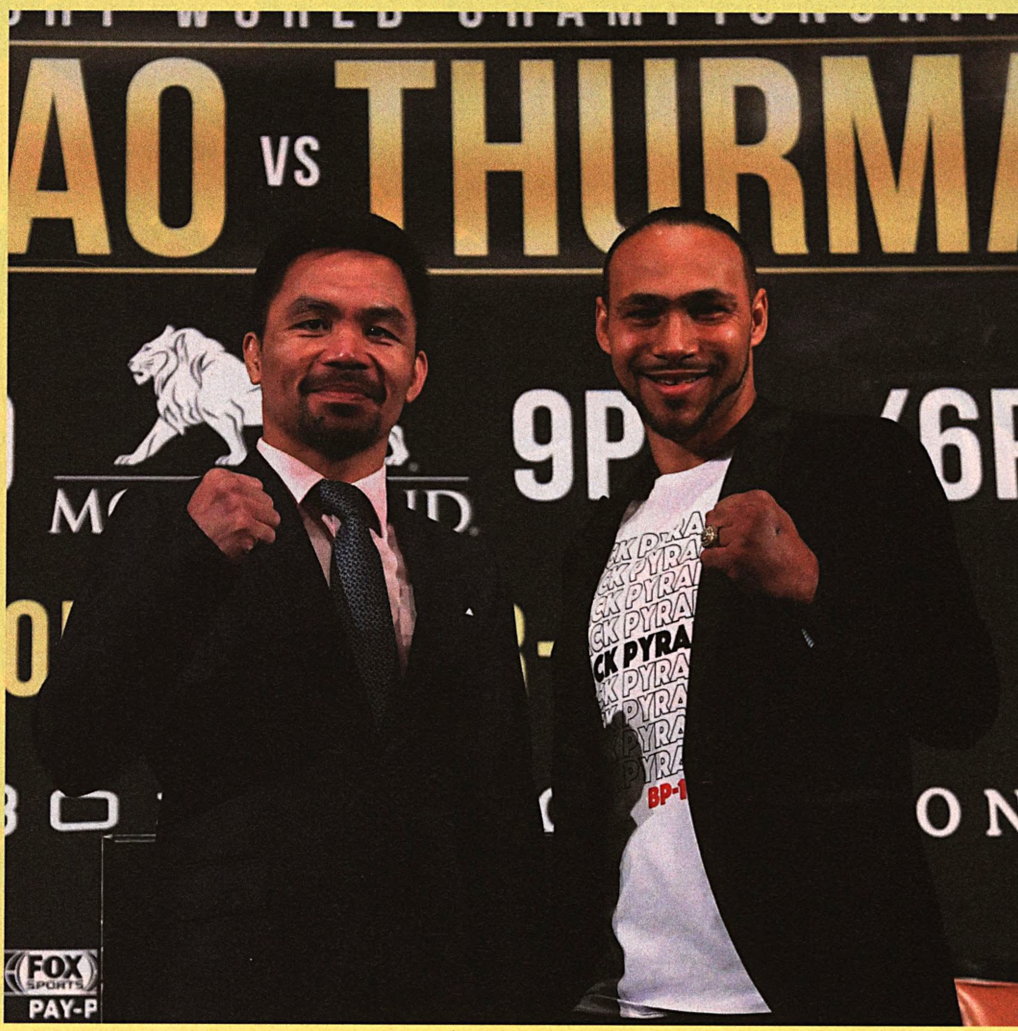
★★★

It turns out that the prescription for what ailed Jerwin Ancajas was vitamin F ... Ryuichi Funai. The Japanese mandatory challenger proved the ideal target for Ancajas on May 4, helping erase the stigma of the hard-to-watch Jonas Sultan defense and the draw with Alejandro Santiago. Of course, it didn't hurt that Funai often led with his face, but Ancajas was on point, landing with his straight left and right hooks until the doctor stopped the fight at the beginning of the the seventh. Afterward, promoter Bob Arum brought up unbeaten Australian Andrew Moloney, one half of the twin pair he recently signed, as a potential opponent.

"I think it would be a good fight, because (Moloney) doesn't have a loss yet and he gives a good fight," said Ancajas.

★★★

For pure drama, Romero Duno's nine-round technical decision over Juan Antonio Rodriguez on May 16 was as good as it gets on smaller shows. The Filipino slugger struggled for much of the night with the southpaw banger who had previously stopped Mercito Gesta in nine rounds, but Duno caught up to Rodriguez with a left hook to the



Has 40-year-old Manny Pacquiao bitten off more than he can chew in 30-year-old Keith Thurman?

PHOTO: PHILIP FONG

body that put him down for a nine count. Worn down and bleeding from both eyes due to head clashes, Rodriguez appeared to tell referee Raul Caiz he was done, but the fight was sent to the cards instead of ending on a TKO. Duno prevailed by split decision in a fight that was reminiscent of his win over Gilberto Gonzalez, another southpaw with power, but it's a double-edged sword when a prospect is already in thrillers at age 23. Duno admitted afterward that his technique looked sloppy but said his heart kept him from accepting defeat: "You may see me struggle, but you will never see me quit," wrote Duno on his Facebook page.

Ryan Songalia is based in New York City and can be reached at ryansongalia@gmail.com.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

It was youth vs. experience at the Orient Theatre in East London when amateur standout Nhlanhla Tyirha met the vastly more experienced former titleholder Nkosinathi Joyi in only his fifth pro fight, and the result was an all-southpaw junior flyweight battle that didn't disappoint. Tyirha had won the national title in his last fight, but Joyi had breathed new life into his career by destroying unbeaten youngster Mpho Seforo in his previous outing. In short, the 36-year-old Joyi is still dangerous and many considered the step up in quality one too far for Tyirha.

Tyirha started fast, peppering Joyi with stiff jabs followed by right hooks, which he often doubled up on. The difference in hand speed was glaring, and Tyirha appeared to stun Joyi with a lead hook. It looked as if youth would be served, but there is a reason why Joyi was once The Ring's No. 1-ranked strawweight.

In the second, he started closing the gap, walking Tyirha into the ropes and corners, finding a home for his body shots and connecting hard, twice, with his straight left.

That set the pattern of the fight: Joyi dominated most of the rounds with his steady pressure, jabbing to the head and chest of Tyirha, following up with body punches and the occasional straight left, while Tyirha fought back in spurts.

Tyirha started looking desperate by the ninth, and when Joyi nailed him with a left uppercut-right hook combo in the 10th it looked as if the fight was on the verge of a stoppage. Tyirha, to his credit, dug deep and answered with a double right hook of his own.

Nkosinathi Joyi and Nhlanhla Tyirha (right) trade right hands during their 12-round bout.

In the final round, Tyirha got on his bicycle, and although he landed a combination in the dying seconds, it was too little, too late. A rejuvenated Joyi won by scores of 118-112, 116-113 and 116-112.

Joyi might have another run at a world title in him, and Tyirha, who at only 19 years of age showed great heart and hand speed, can come back.

★★★

In the main bout, junior bantamweight Athenkosi Dumezweni took on former world title challenger Jonas Sultan, who, with an upset win over John Riel Casimero in 2017 under his belt, was a dangerous step-up opponent for the promising southpaw. After a tentative start, with the South African sidestepping the rushes of his Filipino opponent and struggling to find the target with his jab and straight lefts, Dumezweni finally landed a hard one-two at the end of the third round.

Sultan had some moments in the fifth, landing short right hands and a leaping left uppercut, but was stopped in his tracks by a thudding right to the body. After that, Dumezweni started to time Sultan with his shots, and his side-to-side movement gave the Filipino fits. In the ninth, Dumezweni was credited with a knockdown when he landed a left as his opponent was missing wildly, causing Sultan to fall through the ropes.

Sultan was always the aggressor but paid the price for his lack of finesse in the 11th round, when he rushed in and Dumezweni tagged him with a straight left. This time, there was no disputing the knockdown as Sultan hit the canvas for a second time.

Sultan pressed hard in the last round, looking for a knockout punch that never came. Dumezweni got his most significant win to date with scores of 119-108, 119-109 and 117-109, running his record to 12-2 (8 KOs), and may just be a new player in the stacked 115-pound division.

★★★

IBF flyweight titleholder Moruti Mthalane defended his belt against mandatory challenger Masayuki Kuroda at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, winning by two scores of 116-112 and another card of 117-111, which didn't reflect the competitive nature of the fight. The challenger fought his heart out and started well behind his jab, mixing in some left hooks to the body, but by the third, the champion started finding a home for his right as the fight ebbed and flowed. When Mthalane stepped on the gas in the fifth, the fight seemed to turn, with Kuroda backing off on his heels. Mthalane was nailing him flush with his combinations, even out-jabbing his taller opponent at times.

However, every time it looked like Kuroda might be overwhelmed, he fought back gallantly, whipping in left hooks to the body and having some success with his right. He did so several times in the fight, but the steady stream of tighter, more accurate punches from Mthalane left its mark on his face. The challenger was absorbing punishment and seemed on the verge of a stoppage defeat in the 11th, but he was nothing if not gritty. Bloodied, beaten and arm-weary, he managed to find some fumes in his gas tank in the final round, letting everything hang out, but it was not enough to avoid return fire from Mthalane, who paced himself brilliantly and upped the ante as the fight went on.

The 36-year-old titleholder, ironically nicknamed "Baby Face," is eyeing unification bouts with Charlie Edwards or Kosei Tanaka, and I can think of no one more deserving of a big payday. RING

Droeks Malan is the South African correspondent for The Ring. You can reach him via Twitter @droeksonboxing and read his blogs on couchpotatofightguru.blogspot.com.

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A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Following his infamous "No Mas" surrender to Sugar Ray Leonard in New Orleans, Roberto Duran had recaptured the hearts of fight fans by destroying WBA junior middleweight titleholder Davey Moore to win his third belt in as many divisions. However, the great "Hands of Stone" wanted to go one giant step further. On November 10, 1983, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Duran challenged undisputed middleweight king Marvelous Marvin Hagler in a bid to become the first four-weight world champion in boxing history. A heavy underdog, Duran's savvy and finesse gave "The Marvelous One" all he could handle, but a strong finish from the champion saw him retain his title by 15-round unanimous decision. It was a brilliant performance in defeat by the vastly smaller Duran and is remembered as fondly by his fans as many of his greatest victories.

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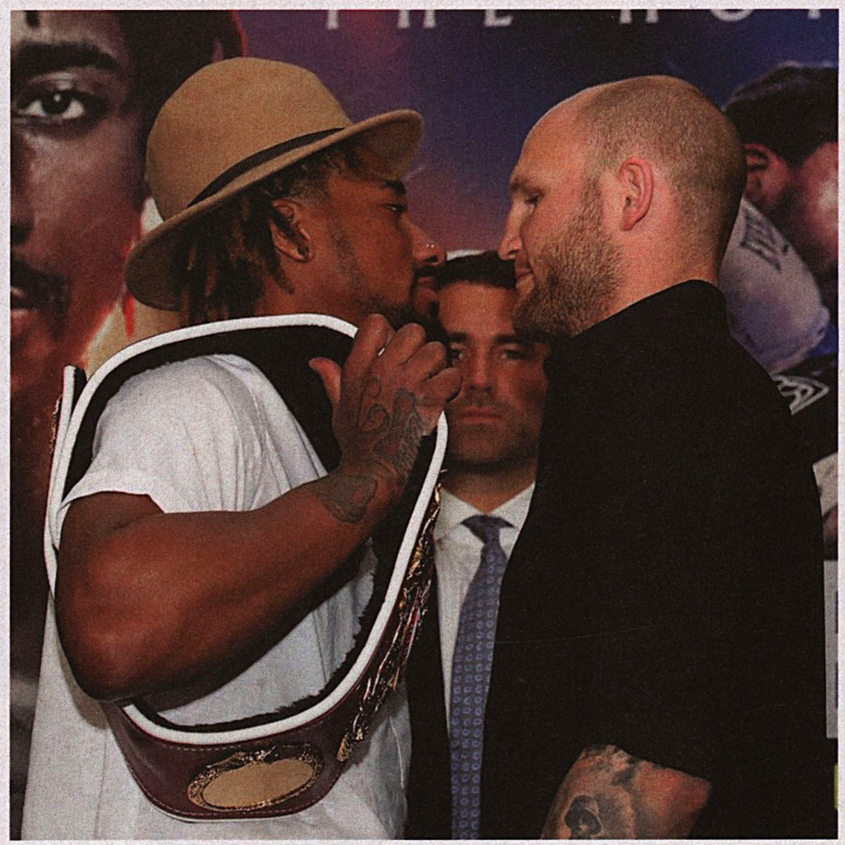

Demetrius Andrade will take on his third opponent in just eight months when he defends his WBO middleweight title against The Ring's No. 8-rated contender, Maciej Sulecki, on June 29 in Rhode Island.

JUNE

JUNE 19 – Hiroto Kyoguchi vs. Tanawat Nakoon, junior flyweights (for Kyoguchi's Ring and WBA titles), Chiba City, Japan. Also, Kazuto Ioka vs. Aston Palicte, junior bantamweights (for vacant WBO title).

JUNE 21 – Andrew Cancio vs. Alberto Machado, junior lightweights, Indio, Calif. (DAZN).

JUNE 23 – Tony Harrison vs. Jermell Charlo, junior middleweights (for Harrison's WBC title), Las Vegas (Fox). Also, Guillermo Rigondeaux vs. Julio Ceja, junior featherweights.

JUNE 28 – Richard Commey vs. Raymundo Beltran, lightweights (for Commey's IBF title), Temecula, Calif. (ESPN).

JUNE 29 – Demetrius Andrade vs. Maciej Sulecki, middleweights (for Andrade's WBO title), Providence, R.I. (DAZN).

JULY

JULY 12 – Rob Brant vs. Ryota Murata, middleweights, Osaka, Japan (ESPN+). Also, Ken Shiro vs. Jonathan Taconing, junior flyweights (for Shiro's WBC title).

JULY 13 – Rey Vargas vs. Tomoki Kameda, junior featherweights (for Vargas' WBC title), Carson, Calif. (DAZN). Also, Ryan Garcia vs. TBA, lightweights.

JULY 20 – Keith Thurman vs. Manny Pacquiao, welterweights (for Thurman's WBA title), Las Vegas (PPV). Also, Caleb Plant vs. Mike Lee, super middleweights (for Plant's IBF title); Yordenis Ugas vs. Omar Figueroa Jr., welterweights; Sergey Lipinets vs. John Molina, welterweights.

JULY 20 – Dillian Whyte vs. Oscar Rivas, heavyweights, London (Sky Box Office).

JULY 27 – Gervonta Davis vs. Ricardo Nunez, junior lightweights (for Davis' WBA title), Baltimore (Showtime).

ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM

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